

# Sight and Sound

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The Brothers Quay**  
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in French cinema**  
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# Sight and Sound



Cronenberg's 'Naked Lunch': 8



Kieslowski's 'Véronique': 22



Inside the Quays' world: 24

## Features

### David Cronenberg

**The wrong body** Amy Taubin  
on *Naked Lunch*'s sexuality

**Fatal knowledge** Michael O'Pray  
on Cronenberg's men

**Interview** with Mark Kermode  
Plus Annotated filmography 8

### Family plots

Why is French cinema, from  
the 20s to *Nikita*, obsessed with  
the father-daughter relationship,  
asks Ginette Vincendeau? 14

### On the road

Two new films challenge the  
timid tradition of television  
documentary, argues James Saynor  
Plus Interview with the film-  
maker John T. Davis 18

### Kieslowski: Crossing over

Tony Rayns explains why  
Kieslowski matters as his new  
film is released 22

### The same dark drift

With their broken dolls and  
detritus, the Brothers Quay  
are extraordinary animators,  
argues Jonathan Romney  
Plus Jayne Pilling reports from  
a US animation conference 24

### Whose studio is it anyway?

*Metropolis* was made in studios  
that are now up for sale. Jennine  
Lanouette explores Germany's  
Hollywood  
Plus Carl-Erdmann Schönfeld  
on documentarists in former  
East Germany 28

## Regulars

### Editorial

Film facts 3

### London

Michael Eaton on

*Bugsy* and the biopic 4

### Festivals

Jonathan Rosenbaum

at Rotterdam 5

**Belgrade** Goran Gocić on  
porn films and Nazi films after  
communism 6

**Obsession** Deanna Petherbridge  
on *Les Jeux des anges* 31

**Books** Merchant Ivory;  
Hollywood gothic; British genre  
cinema; videos and children;  
British cinema of the 60s 32

**Letters** Against Gus Van Sant;  
*Cape Fear*; Documentary 63

**If...** Benjamin Woolley on  
digital cinema 64

### Competition

Cover: David Cronenberg  
photographed by Nigel Dickson 64

## Film reviews

### Bian Zou Bian Chang/

Life on a String 36

Black Robe 37

Blame It on the Bellboy 38

Cape Fear 39

Coupe de Ville 40

Double Impact 41

Double Life of Véronique, The/  
La Double Vie de Véronique 42

Double Vie de Véronique, La/  
The Double Life of Véronique 42

Driving Me Crazy 44

Dutch see Driving Me Crazy 44

Father of the Bride 45

Fried Green Tomatoes at the  
Whistle Stop Café 46

Hear My Song 47

Hello, Hemingway 48

Last Boy Scout, The 49

Life on a String/  
Bian Zou Bian Chang 36

Man in the Moon, The 50

Mobsters see

Mobsters - The Evil Empire 51

Mobsters - The Evil Empire 51

Prince of Tides, The 52

Problem Child 2 53

Star Trek VI:

The Undiscovered Country 54

Strip Jack Naked:

Nighthawks II 55

True Love 56

### Television films

Flea Bites 57

Grass Arena, The 58

Lost Language of Cranes, The 59

## Video reviews

Mark Kermode and William

Green review all this

month's releases 60

**Next issue  
on sale  
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The shadow  
of Dracula : 32

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# Film facts

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Documentary film-making is in a mess in Britain. Or perhaps that is to put it too strongly. Maybe no one quite knows any longer what its responsibilities are or what kinds of documentaries ought to be made. This isn't to say that there aren't plenty of them around – after all, they still provide one of the basic strands of television. In addition to the traditional social affairs documentaries running from *Panorama* to *Cutting Edge*, and series such as *40 Minutes* which seems the moving-picture equivalent of *Picture Post*, over the last ten years there has been a flood of arts documentaries. And this is not to mention the documentaries which came out of the workshops of the 80s, of which *Handsworth Songs* is the most famous example.

The crisis in such film-making is at one level the consequence of the changes that are taking place in television. There is genuine fear that the new post-franchise climate will ensure that documentaries become an endangered species on Channel 3. The sacking of David Plowright from Granada, under the aegis of which documentaries have been sustained – from the work of Denis Mitchell to the combative current affairs documentaries of *World in Action* – seems to some to presage this.

But these institutional changes, however important, are not the whole story. Nor is it sufficient to blame the crisis on a failure of nerve or intelligence on the part of film-makers, although as James Saynor's piece bluntly says, this is sometimes the case.

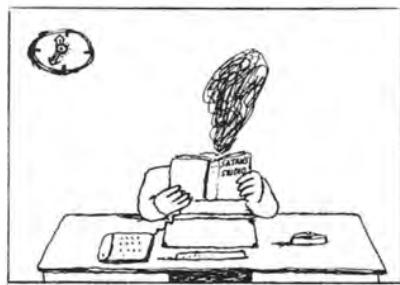
At the core of the crisis is a doubt about the role of documentary. Once its role seemed self-evident. The most powerful documentary film tradition in Britain, stretching from the 30s to television current affairs, was clear that its responsibility was to be socially engaged – documentary and the working class and the disadvantaged seemed to belong to one another –

and to adhere to an aesthetic which, suspicious of playfulness, tended at its worst to conflate seriousness and solemnity. Whatever its problems, the achievements of this tradition are obvious, whether our reference points are *Housing Problems* or the best of *First Tuesday*.

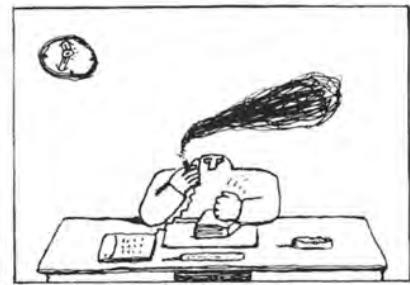
During the 80s, the assumptions of such documentaries, as of so much else, were put under pressure. There was not only overt political scrutiny of current affairs output – the *Death on the Rock* furore was only the most newsworthy example – but a withering contempt for the 'boring worthiness' of socially engaged television. It was no surprise in such circumstances that arts documentaries – which no one in power cared about – should become a space in which new ways of making documentaries and new ways of approaching political and cultural matters could be worked through. It is a sign of the times when *Absurdistan*, a film made in an arts department about the dismantling of communism in Czechoslovakia, won last year's Grierson award for documentary.

If documentary is to remain a serious (but not necessarily solemn) presence in television and even within cinema, there cannot be any simple return to the status quo ante, whether Thatcherism, the collapse of welfarism, or the crisis of realism. There has to be a recognition – and there are glimmers of it in BBC2's current series *Fine Cut* and in the future *Developing Stories* – that documentary can be more aesthetically various and less predictable than it so often is. Of course to realise its potential, documentary needs to extend not only its ambitions, but the range of people who make it. The virtual absence of women and the complete absence of black British contributors from *Fine Cut* is damaging. For don't let anyone tell you that aesthetic matters are separable from cultural and political ones. Documentary has never believed that.

## JERRY ON LINE #1



James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



*\*Jerry, I've just read "Satan's Studio" by that wimp I kicked out of the story department. It contains over 200 negative references to me. Makes me out to be a power-mad despot with the sensitivity of a Stallone pic. Sounds like one helluva movie Jerry... go fetch the film rights!*

# Bugsy and Clyde

Michael Eaton

Benjamin Siegel would not have been impressed by the title. For this luminary of *Murder Inc.* – who left New York to consolidate the East Coast crime capos' hold over the Californian drug trade before becoming obsessed with providing syndicate-controlled gambling in the state of Nevada with a glitzy facade – hated his moniker of 'Bugsy'. But somehow I think he would have loved the movie.

The first surprise of Barry Levinson's exquisitely mounted film, scripted by James Toback, is that it is not a gangster movie. To be fair, TriStar is not in any way pushing it as such. The poster bears an image of Warren Beatty in evening dress with his lips tantalising millimetres away from co-star and current lover, Annette Bening, accompanied by the tag line: "Glamour was the Disguise" – quite for what is left to our imagination. So the movie is sold to us as a period love story. But this is only half the story.

Perhaps *Bugsy* is best approached as a biopic – a biopic *about* a gangster, but which conforms more closely to the requirements of the 30s biopic genre than to those of the gangster movie. Until *The Godfather*, the narrative development of the gangster movie usually followed a straightforward rise and fall structure: humble beginnings, meteoric ascent to world of wealth, retributive culmination in a hail of bullets in a slimy gutter fifty storeys beneath the nightclub world of the second act. Though gangster movies have often been based on the true-life crimes of figures whose violent deaths made the headlines, the pull of generic convention was always too strong to be affected by historical imperatives. This was usually the case with the biopic, too, which worked within strong generic rules whose purpose was to flatten out historical contradictions in order to present a mythic version of what a great life should be.

One common theme of the biopic is the misunderstood genius – "they all laughed at Christopher Columbus, when he said the world was round". The man (usually) of vision, his eyes fixed firmly on a better future, is scorned by his ignorant contemporaries, who can see no value in his revolutionary undertaking. Whether he is a band leader (Glenn Miller), a scientist (Pasteur) or a politician (Abraham Lincoln), his success is assured, even if only after his death. His end is pre-ordained in his beginning, as he struggles valiantly against the obstacles the world throws in the way of his unique endeavour.

Such a film is *Bugsy*. It is less concerned with criminal assassination and the mechanics of transcontinental dope peddling than with the vainglorious aspiration of building an oasis in the desert – the casino in Las Vegas which Siegel named after his girlfriend, Virginia Hill,



**Creating a genre: is 'Bugsy' a gangster movie, a biopic or just another Warren Beatty film?**

who was less inclined than he was to fly into a lethal rage when referred to by her nickname: 'The Flamingo'.

The film has a particular resonance with my own concerns, as I am at the moment writing a biopic about another unlikely yet equally romantic hero: Sir Roger Casement, who was hanged as a traitor for his half-cocked involvement in the 1916 Irish Rebellion and who, in his trail-blazing adventures in Africa and South America, had a series of deeply felt romantic entanglements with young male colonial subjects.

When the writer struggles to make structural sense out of the mess that is a real person's historical existence, it is impossible to avoid two specific scenes: the first, in which the hero is vouchsafed the vision of the cause which will determine his life, and the second in which he decides, out of some demented inner compulsion, to continue to pursue this cause, even though we know that it must inevitably lead to his death. *Bugsy* has both scenes. In the first, Siegel stands alone in the arid desert and, in a moment which the film defines as "a religious epiphany", he is visited with the idea... to build the greatest casino ever known to man! The second is when he is told that the escalating costs of his venture are due to the fact that Virginia has been skimming off the top and salting the mob's money away in a Swiss bank account. By refusing to believe this, Siegel chooses his own downfall. But although the film ends in tragedy, a final caption, played over contemporary footage of the lights of the Holy City of Las Vegas, underpins the essential rectitude of his dream.

This is a film about a man with a far-away look in his eye, and when that man is played by Warren Beatty it's a hard one

from which to avert your gaze, even though this is an account which is more than open to criticism on the warranted but irrelevant grounds of skirting over some of the less savoury aspects of Siegel's career. For the conventions of the biopic are here crossed with another, more recent sub-genre: *Bugsy* is undoubtedly a 'Warren Beatty film'. Benjamin Siegel has now been admitted to that sparsely populated cinematic Parnassus whose other inhabitants include Clyde Barrow and John Reed. If *Reds* was a love story which reached its climax with the triumph of the October Revolution, then *Bugsy* is a love story which peaks around the building of Las Vegas. If *Bonnie and Clyde* is a film about a country boy who transcended an unpromising background to metamorphose into pure folk icon, then *Bugsy* is about a similarly rough-hewn specimen who discovers an ability to dream his dreams on all our behalves.

It is tempting to see this genre as one of disguised autobiography, and not only because of the casting of the leading ladies. If *Reds* expressed Beatty's aspiration towards radical credibility, then, crudely, *Bugsy* could be seen to express his desire for ultimate control in the dream factory.

What designer cars were to Coppola in *Tucker: The Man and his Dream*, so a casino is to Beatty in a film which could easily bear the same subtitle. As the mob gun Ben Siegel down at the end of the film he is sitting quietly in his lavish mansion re-running his favourite movie – his own Hollywood screen test. At last the metaphor is actualised. In an American film industry which sneers at the extravagant demands of visionary auteurs, *Bugsy* celebrates this vanishing breed of self-determined obsessives.

'Bugsy' opens on 20 March.

If 'Reds' expressed Beatty's aspiration towards radical credibility, then, crudely, 'Bugsy' could be seen to express his desire for ultimate control in the dream factory

# Intimate passions

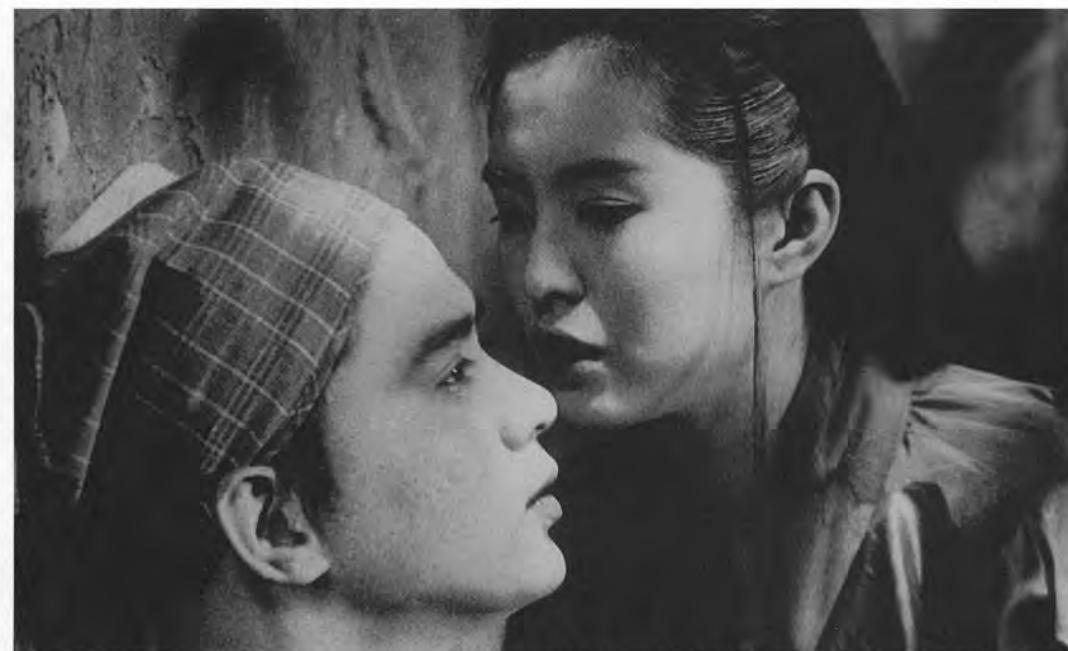
Jonathan Rosenbaum

There was a discernible change of emphasis at this year's Rotterdam Festival under its new director, Emile Fallaux. Certainly, there were fewer intellectual and scholarly events and interests than in the reign of Marco Müller, who has moved on to Locarno, although the creation of a new organisation called 'The Limits of Liberty' to promote free expression for film-makers (somewhat after the model of PEN) signalled a new activist impulse. With selections now made by a team of Dutch programmers rather than a single individual, Rotterdam has arguably become more of a Dutch event than it was under the extended rule of the late Hubert Bals, who tended to shun native product. But one welcome constant is a passionate defence of the marginal and surreptitious, and an overall sense of equality that puts studio tyros and independents on the same footing.

One of the most striking films this year was Zhang Yuan's *Mama*, an independently made, banned work from mainland China about mentally handicapped children. Alternating between an emotionally subdued fictional story in black and white about a mother and her retarded son and highly emotional documentary interviews in colour video with the real-life counterparts, the film sets up a neo-Brechtian strategy with complex dividends. (Interestingly, the screenwriter, Qing Yan, appears as both the fictional mother and as herself in a video interview.)

At the other end of the economic scale was Léos Carax's ravishing *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf*, resurrecting the Alex (Denis Lavant) of Carax's earlier *Boy Meets Girl* (1983) and *Mauvais sang* (1986) as a Parisian street punk who falls in love with a slumming street artist (Juliette Binoche). The true star of the film, however, is the gargantuan studio set of Pont-Neuf and environs, brought to life by a dreamlike conceit – Paris as plaything – that has agreeably serviced French cinema from René Clair to Jacques Tati. Decorating his plaything with everything from fireworks to snow, Carax mounts a moving love story that fully earns its homage to *L'Atalante* in the closing sequence.

A more aberrant – therefore more characteristic – Rotterdam speciality was Qiu Gangjian's *A Ying (Ming Ghost)*, a Taiwanese remake of Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1951) conceived less as a meaningful statement about relative truths than as a pretext for diverse formal hijinks and decadent campy notations. Directed by the man who translated Genet into Mandarin, the movie revels in outsize gestures played against stark decors and a mannerist *mise en scène* that alternately elevates and undermines those gestures. Unashamedly self-indulgent, it carries the undeniable novelty value of an Asian midnight movie



Subverting the traditional: 'Ming Ghost', Qiu Gangjian's remake of 'Rashomon', mixes formal hijinks and camp gestures

There is a passionate defence of the marginal and an overall sense of equality that puts studio tyros and independents on the same footing

devoted to laying waste the traditional – almost as if a John Waters or a David Lynch were set loose inside a Chinese opera.

A much more sober outsider's look at Chinese culture is *Shoot for the Contents* by Tring T. Minh-ha, a US-based, Sorbonne-educated writer and film-maker who embarked on this project as an indirect way of investigating her own Vietnamese roots. (Her next documentary will be about India, the other major source of Vietnamese culture.) Disconcerting for those expecting documentaries about China to be packaged as purveyors of authoritative facts, the film is more concerned with finding ways of thinking about China – not trying to speak about what it doesn't know, though enlisting certain Chinese arts (most notably architecture and calligraphy) in its strategies of poetic evocation. Much of the dispersed presentation of *Shoot for the Contents* – whose title alludes to a Chinese guessing game – consists of speculative conversations and diverse kinds of visual displacement, all

of which contrive to approach China 'cubistically', through a series of mutually contrasted outsider positions and layered perspectives.

Rotterdam regular Luc Moullet was back with *La Cabale des oursins*, a hilarious short in defence of slagheaps – scornfully omitted from official maps, but lovingly surveyed by Moullet, both physically and philosophically. In Nina Menkes' *Queen of Diamonds*, a powerful minimalist non-drama set in Las Vegas, the marginal – in this case an abandoned wife (played by Tinka Menkes) – becomes downright luminous, through landscapes and events in which the heroine figures as a peripheral detail in a mysterious expanse.

Taking place just before Berlin, Rotterdam invariably loses some selections to the bigger festival – a regrettable concession to the vanity of programmers rather than a service to spectators at either event. But as always, the festival made up for these losses by the intimacy and intensity of its atmosphere.



Parisian dreamscape: 'Les Amants du Pont-Neuf', a big-budget movie about down-and-outs

# Forbidden fruit

Goran Gocić

The majority of stories one hears these days about Yugoslavia are grim reports from the front, or tales of yet further unsuccessful negotiations and/or ceasefires. However, despite its misfortunes, the country is experiencing greater levels of personal and public freedom than at any point in the last half century.

In terms of cinema, the beginning of the story was in 1988, when Beograd Film purchased a couple of hard-core porn titles and sneakily previewed them. For Yugoslavs, the films held the same exotic fascination as the first McDonalds (the Belgrade McDonalds at one point had the turnover of any branch in the world). To judge by the reaction to the first movie to be shown, *Sexcapades*, it seemed that porn would have a similar success rate in drawing people back to the cinemas. As there was no reaction from the authorities, an abundance of similar products flooded the market.

What we might call the second stage in the regeneration of Yugoslav cinema was the public screening of domestic films that had been shelved for years. More often than not these films had never been officially banned, but were 'withheld' by their production companies to avoid court cases and political scandal. Zivojin Pavlović's *The Ambush* (Zaseda, 1969), which dealt with the darker side of the Partisan involvement in the Second World War, and Lazar Stojanović's *Plastic Jesus* (Plastični Isus, 1970), a patchwork influenced by the American avant-garde, are just two examples. Stojanović made *Plastic Jesus* as a graduate assignment for the Belgrade Academy of Dramatic Arts. The film showed excerpts of a surprisingly human Tito preparing for a television speech; unfortunately, Tito was not amused, so Stojanović was jailed for two years and his film career ended. As Belgrade critic Bogdan Tirnanić has caustically remarked, "this put Yugoslavia in the same league as the greatest national film industries in the world – USA, USSR and Turkey – in which directors were sentenced for their films".

The final stage in the regeneration has been the showing of films which for almost always political reasons had failed to reach the screens. As the walls of ideological, often self-imposed, censorship crumbled, a fetish for forbidden fruit from former times developed, with the attitude that anything the system resented or suppressed must be good. Needless to say this wasn't always the case.

In October 1991 the Yugoslav Cinematheque reopened after two years of renovation. Along with films such as Vilgot Sjöman's *I am Curious-Yellow* (1967), Paul Morrissey's *Flesh* (1968), and Russ Meyer's *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* (1970), it also screened some 'forgotten' masterpieces. Mihajlo Aleksandrov Popović's *With Faith in*



Zivojin Pavlović's 'The Ambush', a film revealing the dark side of the Partisans

Trenchant commentators might connect parts of Roger Corman's 'Red Baron', about First World War air duels, with the Croatian warfare/crop-spraying 'air force'

*God* (Sa verom u Boga, 1932) a silent drama about the First World War, had been omitted from communist film history textbooks in part because it was made before the regime (and its cinema) were established, but also because it represented a Serbian (rather than Yugoslav) point of view and is the only explicitly Christian film in the history of the national cinema. *Sholaya* (*Solaja*, 1955) by Vojislav Nanović is a strikingly vivid portrayal of the complicated mix of national and political forces that fought in Yugoslavia in the Second World War. An almost exact replica of the present war, it could be seen as a proof of Yugoslav intransigence.

The new political context enables many films to be viewed from an entirely different perspective. Among the most interesting is Louis King's *Chetniks!* (1942), a comic-book approach to anti-Nazi propaganda. The comic effect produced by the screening was derived from the fact that historical figures who have been the subject of political controversy for decades are placed in the film in the context of a spoof western. *Chetniks!* not only attack a convoy on horseback and shoot Colt 45s, but in the final showdown they kill Germans in quantities unprecedented even in Yugoslav Partisan movies.

Screening of Nazi films, on the other hand, can be read as attempts at anti-Ger-

man propaganda and a warning against recent aggressive German foreign policy. The Cinematheque's recent retrospective of such work, which includes over 180 titles ranging from obscure Nazi trivia (*Way to Strength and Beauty*, 1925) to the masterpieces of Leni Riefenstahl, provides both a new political perspective and an interesting aesthetic counterpoint to left-wing Eastern European film-making. It is not just a question of what Walter Benjamin called a fascist "aestheticisation of politics" opposed to a socialist "politicisation of art"; rather, the two types of film represent the extremes of mythologisation versus demystification, theatricality versus documentary, and the sacred versus the profane.

While there is indeed a striking parallel between the success of German athletes at the 1936 Berlin Olympics (*Olympia*, 1936) and last year's triumph of Yugoslav sport, which coincided with a similar upsurge of nationalist euphoria, more trenchant commentators might also connect the wish of one of the Nazi rally speakers in *Triumph of the Will* (1936) for the "unification of all Germans of the world" with similar Serbian cries at present. Or parts of Roger Corman's *Red Baron* (1971), about First World War air duels, with the Croatian warfare/crop-spraying 'air force'.

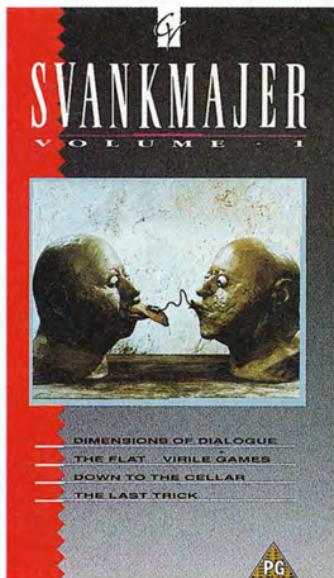
The very titles of the seasons in the Cinematheque programme, '39 American films from 1939', 'Macho Western', 'Serbian film – recapitulation', 'Veit Harlan' (including his version of *Jew Süss*, 1940), 'Leni Riefenstahl' (including the just as rarely screened *Day of Freedom*, 1935) demonstrate that there isn't just a 'politics of the author', but also a 'politics of the exhibitor'. Perhaps, therefore, all similarities to real events and persons, living or dead, is purely – intentional.



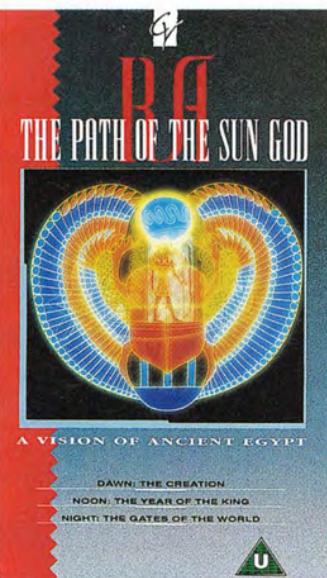
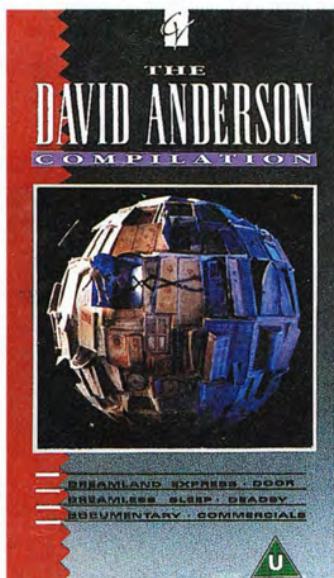
'Chetniks!': comic-book anti-Nazism

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● *Naked Lunch* is less an adaptation of William Burroughs' novel than David Cronenberg's fantasy about how it came to be written. The young Cronenberg wanted to be a writer; Burroughs and Nabokov were his models. He claims that he turned to film-making when he realised he'd never write as well as either of them.

Affronts to the 'I married Joan' sit-com consciousness of the Eisenhower era, Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* and Nabokov's *Lolita* each presented a radically different version of subversive male sexuality, modernist reflexivity and expatriate alienation, not to mention a fascination with insect life connected in part to a certain queasiness about the female body. The obscenity trials which surrounded the publication of both novels in the US marked the beginning of the end of the repressive 50s. Today, the stuff the authorities claimed was pornographic – homosexuality in *Naked Lunch*, paedophilia in *Lolita* – is the staple of television talk shows. Nevertheless, the context in which these subjects are placed is as poisonously puritanical as it was forty years ago. "I'm afraid that 1993 is going to be like 1953", Cronenberg commented. 1953 is the year in which the film *Naked Lunch* is set.

Between 1984, when Cronenberg and producer Jeremy Thomas acquired the rights to the novel, and the film's Christmas 1991 release (just in time for it to win both a New York Film Critics and a National Film Critics award), Burroughs' devotees questioned whether Cronenberg was the right man for the job. There

were obvious similarities in the Burroughs and the Cronenberg oeuvres: the sci-fi paranoia, the fascination with control and addiction, the definition of subjectivity as unstable, biochemical and hallucinatory, the connection between sex and vampires, sex and disease, sex and mutation, sex and death.

Yet while sexuality is polymorphous and definitely perverse in the work of both Burroughs and Cronenberg, the trajectory of desire and the specifics of representation is homosexual in the former and heterosexual in the latter. Thus *The Advocate*, a major American gay weekly, cautioned against expecting much from "the heterosexual Cronenberg". The irony is that the gay critics who've attacked the film would have great difficulty recuperating much of Burroughs – the terroristic goings-on in 'Hassan's Rumpus Room', for example, which are among the pages of *Naked Lunch* most vividly inscribed in the collective cultural memory – within their politics of essentialism and positive imagery.

Cronenberg responds to the criticism as follows: "It wasn't as if there were a dozen directors vying for the rights and they gave it to the heterosexual". Indeed, when Cronenberg acquired *Naked Lunch*, no one else was interested. "If *Naked Lunch* were a gay book and that's all, you would have an argument. I wouldn't do *The Wild Boys* [the Burroughs novel that's high on Gus Van Sant's agenda]. But the sex in *Naked Lunch* is beyond gay. It's sci-fi sex; it has metaphorical meaning every way". Yet when

I ask Cronenberg what he thinks of Kubrick's *Lolita* (1961), an adaptation fraught with similar problems, he answers that although James Mason's performance is perfect, he didn't like the film very much when he first saw it. "The actress who played *Lolita* was too old. She's supposed to be a child, not a teenager. To shift that shifts everything".

The shift that Cronenberg makes in *Naked Lunch* is to wind it around the body of a woman. He takes as his premise Burroughs' statement in the introduction to *Queer* that if he hadn't killed his wife Joan, he would never have become a writer. Burroughs, however, goes on to say that he put up a writer's block around her death; women barely exist in his work. Cronenberg, on the other hand, structures *Naked Lunch* as a bare-bones, but not unconventional, *noir* narrative. The film is driven by the repetition-compulsion of its protagonist William Lee – his need to save and destroy his wife Joan over and over again.

To lift a metaphor from *The Fly* (1986), *Naked Lunch* is less a case of Cronenberg adapting than absorbing Burroughs. That the experiment is not totally successful is proof of Burroughs' stature both as a writer and counterculture myth. Nevertheless, the first half of the film is nearly as intellectually inventive, mordantly witty and visually stunning as Cronenberg's *Dead Ringers* (1988). Pristine and putrid, the decor encompasses every shade of shit and glows as if it were radioactive. Erupting from this controlled, though repellent, visual ▶

Both Cronenberg and Burroughs are absorbed in sci-fi sex, but the director makes a woman's body, not a man's, the centre of the film – and that makes all the difference

# The wrong body

By Amy Taubin



Behind the eyes:  
Peter Weller as Bill  
Lee in Cronenberg's  
'Naked Lunch'



◀ surface is a diarrhoeic flow of language, thick with puns, threats and obscenities.

The film opens with Lee trying to live the 'straight life'. He's married and has a job as an exterminator. Lee and Joan get addicted to the poison he uses to kill roaches. (For heroin and hashish, Cronenberg substitutes sci-fi drugs – bug powder and the meat of the black centipede. The drugs are not merely agents of hallucination, they are hallucinatory in and of themselves.)

High on bug powder, Lee is contacted by a giant roach whose wings spread open to reveal a talking, all-too-human-looking asshole. The roach tells Lee that his wife Joan is an alien and instructs him to kill her. Lee invites Joan to play a game of William Tell. He aims for the glass she's placed on her head, but the roach takes control and the bullet blasts her brain. Lee flees to Interzone with the bug, which now has the body of an old-fashioned Smith-Corona typewriter grafted on to its head.

The film's central image is of Lee alone in his wretched hotel room sitting in front of this insect writing machine, which functions as a combination id and super-ego. "I'm your case worker", it tells him, "your contact to Control". Control wants Lee to write reports about the death of Joan Lee. The game of William Tell has made it possible for William to tell all, that is, to write *Naked Lunch*.

Lee gets involved with two other American expatriate writers, Tom and Joan Frost (modelled on Paul and Jane Bowles). In an extremely sinister scene, Lee reads Tom's mind and discovers that just as he destroyed Joan Lee, Tom is destroying Joan Frost. Departing from both the Burroughs biography and the homoerotics of *Naked Lunch*, Lee becomes obsessed with saving Joan. She invites him to try Tom's favourite typewriter. Messing around in the back of the machine, her hand penetrates a kind of uterine cavity – red, raw and pulsating. The scene is terrifyingly erotic, and given the anal-retentive quality of the rest of the film, flagrantly transgressive. The effect is to stop the film long before it's over. The potentially chilling scenes that follow – Lee selling out Kiki, his boy lover, to the cannibalistic Yves Cloquet; his discovery of the factory farm where the Mugwamps are milked by human sex slaves addicted to their jissom; the revelation of the hermaphroditic identity of the controlling Dr Benway; Lee's shooting of the second Joan in order to prove to the border guards of Annexia that he's really a writer – happen as if by rote.

Brilliant as it is, Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* never resolves the incompatibility between the heterosexual drive of its narrative and the remnants of Burroughs' homoerotic fantasy. The amazing insect typewriter, which collapses desire for buggery with paranoia about being bugged, could never have produced the encounter between William Lee and Joan Frost. "It's not the instruments that are wrong; it's the women's bodies" cries one of *Dead Ringer*'s twin gynaecologists as he descends into madness. In terms of *Naked Lunch*, he might just have a point.



At the edge of the world: Bill Lee is only the latest of Cronenberg's crumbling men

## Fatal knowledge

**Damaged men are at the heart of David Cronenberg's films, argues Michael O'Pray**

As a young aspiring writer in the 60s, David Cronenberg fell under the spell of two charismatic literary figures – Nabokov and Burroughs. Although he lacks the Russian's delicate sexual palette and the beat writer's high-pitched insolence, a case could be made for interpreting Cronenberg's entire film output since then (he spent his first literary grant on making a film) in terms of these two fatally charming writers. With *Naked Lunch*, the director has discharged a debt to one of these influences – or so it would seem.

But Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch* is at least as much a report from his own bunker as it is from Burroughs'. And it is in his depiction of the writer/drug addict Bill Lee that his own slant on things comes to dominate the adaptation of a book he always realised would need interpretation, its literal translation on to the screen being impossible. For this reader/viewer, at least, Cronenberg's Lee is a different persona to Burroughs' original. One obvious difference is that Cronenberg's Lee is a heterosexual let loose in a paranoid homosexual-riddled phantasy. And much of the film's interest lies in the discomfort experienced before these jarring, finally incompatible sexualities.

Cronenberg's representation of Lee exemplifies a theme that

has run throughout the director's feature films, in which maleness, as personified by various 'heroes', has had a particular rendering. For Lee is the last in a string of male protagonists who in one way or another are primarily outsiders: disengaged, passive, ultimately fragile personalities who, in narrative terms, upon gaining the self-knowledge they initially lack are psychically or even physically annihilated, sometimes both.

Only Scorsese (a long-standing fan of Cronenberg's films) has presented as intriguing an account of the modern male from a male perspective. But by contrast with the seemingly robust Italian-American macho psyche explored in *Mean Streets* (1973), *Taxi Driver* (1975) and *Raging Bull* (1980), Cronenberg's men are articulate, educated loners, isolated from their surroundings and psychically troubled to a manic extreme. More often than not they are victims of their inability to resolve internal dilemmas. Played against them is a series of 'strong' women characters – committed, at one with their desires, capable of action and often the emotional nexus of the narrative. The Cronenberg *mise en scène* of techno-phantasy upon which his reputation rests – the parasites, the growths, the visceral invasions of the body – is male through and through.

To begin at the beginning, *Shivers* (1974) locates the originating moment of the marauding sex bug – the ostensible subject of the film – in a *mise en scène* of bourgeois

alienation, with a man cruelly distanced from his wife, his emotions and his surroundings. This male *ennui* rendered as a form of impotence is carried forward in *Shivers* by its cliché hero, the resident doctor who ineffectually tries to deal with the bugs. Within this desolate scenario of dislocated male desire, the only scene that represents any kind of meaningful knowledge is where Barbara Steele's Betts kisses Susan Petrie's Janine and passes on the parasite. The sexual attraction between them is acknowledged, as if the parasite had secured their true desires against those dictated by bourgeois society. For the doctor hero, there is no such recognition, only a banal and ignominious submission to mass rape in the swimming pool during the final sequence.

### Fragmentation

Cronenberg's next film, *Rabid* (1976), continues to explore the same issues, but places a woman at its centre. Marilyn Chambers' Rose recognises and confronts her desire for another woman, albeit reluctantly, while her ineffectual male lover frets on the sidelines. In its location of knowledge/desire/action in women and its marginalisation of the man, *Rabid* more fully develops the theme of *Shivers*. Samantha Eggar's vengeful wife in *The Brood* (1979) is an even more explicit example of a knowing and active woman confronted by an estranged and tyrannised husband.

Cronenberg's theme is less explicit in *Scanners* (1980), though here the director uses

for the first time the device of splitting a 'character', in this case two warring brothers (a precursor of the twins of *Dead Ringers*) who can literally kill (Cronenberg's version of the Freudian 'omnipotence of thought'), and who in the end annihilate each other through fusion. After *Scanners*, Cronenberg's men become more central and more interesting, though the price paid is in fragmentation and self-destructive psychical states.

*Videodrome* (1982), a tale of the fatal attraction and bizarre and grotesque physical effects of pornography and sexual 'perversity', is the first Cronenberg film whose central male character has classic macho qualities and any depth and effectiveness. But tough guy Max Renn (James Woods) is no match for either Nicki (Deborah Harry) or Bianca Oblivion, played by Sonja Smits (initially also to be played by Deborah Harry - a further sign of Cronenberg's fascination with splitting). Renn's lethal flaw is lack of self-knowledge in comparison with Nicki, who recognises and has the courage of her sexual convictions. Part of the fascination of the film lies in Renn's *film noir*-like confusion (compare Jack Nicholson's J.J. Gittes in *Chinatown*, 1974) and his innocence (paradoxically, for a peddler of TV soft porn) before the world of real desires in the form of Nicki's confident sadomasochistic wants. The gradual disintegration of the tough television executive through mental and sexual anxiety and his horrific transformation is a classic variation on Cronenberg's vision of masculinity.

Christopher Walken in his haunting performance in

*The Dead Zone* (1983) represents the same type of gentle innocent as the husband of *The Brood* and the 'good' twin of *Dead Ringers*. Walken suffers the world in its every detail and only finds resolution in a final act of murder that brings about his own death. As love, life, and politics go on, he lies a broken-backed victim of his own, almost 'feminine' sensitivity.

Jeff Goldblum's scientist in *The Fly* (1986) is also an outsider, inept at coping with emotions and reality. His rational, cold approach to his own decay expresses a self-alienation that finds its only outlet in death and annihilation. It is his girlfriend who knows reality, love and feeling and who carries the burden of existence, symbolised by her traumatic pregnancy.

#### Addiction

*Dead Ringers* (1988) is the most highly-wrought and focused study of the male in *extremis* in Cronenberg's oeuvre. Protected by all the accoutrements of modern masculinity - power, fame, success and sexual attraction - the twins' egg-shell defences fragment when feeling enters by way of Claire (Genevieve Bujold), whose carnal knowledge of both of them is the catalyst for their destruction.

In this light, Cronenberg's Bill Lee is another male in crisis, a man so entrapped in a world where the addictive toil of writing has collapsed into the world of junk that his only test of reality is a test of some almost-forgotten desire. The regular call on his wife to balance an object on her head which he will shoot with his revolver is an action that stands in for and parodies their

relationship, an attempt by both of them to return to a meaningful base. To kill her is to confront the desire that gives sense to this ritual, which is at the same time an ancient test of love, an ancient gesture of nihilism and an ancient provider of meaning. With Joan's death, Bill rids himself of the last vestige of the world and is plunged into the Interzone. Joan Lee returns in the Interzone as the decadent writer Joan Frost, and it is the Joan Lee/Joan Frost characters who provide the emotional nexus of Cronenberg's film. Their vulnerability emanates from a knowledge Lee does not possess: that desire must be satisfied in the real.

With Bill Lee, Cronenberg amalgamates a Bogartian physical toughness with an intellectual aggressiveness, in a character confronting his imagination and the mechanics of writing. The conception of the writer is of a cornered psyche willing to trade in the surfaces and structures of things only with cynicism and loathing ("exterminate all rational thought", says Lee to his writer buddies). His desperation is manic. Its only resolution is in the killing of the loved object.

Drugs, writing and fucking in Burroughs are Sadeian repetitions, endless and in the end useless violations of nature and the world by some repeated act. To see de Sade's writings as an addictive study in addiction is perhaps to understand that Cronenberg's own addiction is to the film that persistently reworks the same emotionally drained emptiness that is man, maleness, masculinity. As usual, the most recent report from the Cronenberg bunker makes disturbing viewing.

Interview by Mark Kermode

# David Cronenberg

"I think that the body of a person living now is substantially different from one which was alive even ten years ago", says David Cronenberg, master of mutation and champion of viral change. "We've altered the earth, the magnetic waves in the air, and we've altered ourselves. I think that change itself is fairly neutral, but it contains the potential to be either positive or negative. I'm not a Victorian or a Romantic who believes that we are evolving in an inevitably positive way. Nor am I a Marxist who sees the March of History leading us to something grand and glorious. I really believe that we create our own reality, and it's only in the human mind that any kind of moral judgment exists. We are the source of all judgment and thus it really will depend on us. It's up to us to say 'Yes I like this better', and if enough of us say that, then by God it is better. To me there is no outside judgment".

Although the writer/director David Cronenberg is renowned for presenting in his films startlingly visceral portrayals of physical aberration, it is his staunch refusal to characterise this mutation as necessarily negative which has given his work its radical, shocking edge. From the cancerous rebellion of the body depicted in *The Brood* (1979) to the genetic transmutation of *The Fly* (1986), Cronenberg's films have all gazed sympathetically at the myriad diseases which beset his lonely heroes. "I seem to have contracted a disease with a purpose", observes scientist Seth Brundle in *The Fly* as his fragile flesh falls away to reveal the exoskeleton of a tough, insect. The 'purpose', although far from pleasant, is also far from fatal.

This unshakeable belief in the unavoidable nature of change (it is neither good nor bad, it simply is) lies at the centre of Cronenberg's cinema. Together, his films constitute a perversely polemical body of work which has grown in strange and wondrous ways while retaining an immutable thematic heart. The rebellion of the body; the unconscious redefinition of the self; the shock of the flesh - each of these themes has been employed by Cronenberg to address his recurrent central thesis: the acceptance and celebration of mutation.

Although Cronenberg has often used the work of other writers as a starting point for his films (neither *Dead Ringers* nor *The Fly* were his own original conceptions), only *The Dead Zone* (1983) smacks of outside influences, alien strains which interrupt the flow of his recurrent personal preoccupations. Working as a hired gun for Dino De Laurentiis on this big-budget Stephen King adaptation, Cronenberg seemed for once uncharacteristically unable (or unwilling) to twist the material to his own designs. The end result is a Cronenberg movie for those people who don't like Cronenberg. ▶



Awful desires: the fragile Bill Lee with the powerful Joan Frost, his wife's alter ego

◀ riddled not with cancerous charm but more with Kingly camp.

Now, with *Naked Lunch*, Cronenberg has once again allowed the stream of his work to be infected by an external agent. As before, that agent is a powerful writer with a mythology all his own. Unlike his earlier dalliance with King, however, Cronenberg's mating with William Burroughs has revealed a striking similarity of artistic purpose. Both Cronenberg and Burroughs are obsessed by transition, by characters becoming other characters, and each has developed a personal motif with which to explore this theme. For the director, viruses or cancers are the agent of change; for the writer, drugs hold the key.

"It was understood by me (because I had no choice) and by Burroughs (because he's smart) that this movie was going to be a creature on its own", Cronenberg asserts forcefully. "It would be a kind of fusion of Burroughs and me, as if we'd gotten into the telepod from *The Fly* together and come out of the other telepod as some creature which would not have existed separately. The movie of *Naked Lunch* is not something that Burroughs would have done, and it's also something that I would never have done - we did it together. That it should be different from my other films and from what Burroughs writes is only appropriate.

"Burroughs was one of the major influences on me when I thought I was going to become a novelist. There was an incredible recognition when I started to read Burroughs, like 'My God, this is in me too!' I think both Burroughs and I are very interested in metamorphosis or transformation, and that naturally leads us to attempt to have some understanding of the nature of disease and the relationship of the human condition and disease.

"I agree that you could see the drugs in Burroughs' writing and the viruses in my films being used by us metaphorically in the same way. They are both something that is potentially dangerous but also attractive, a very powerful agent of transformation. In a way, you give up your soul to either one of them, but in return you get another soul that may or may not be the soul that you're looking for... we're not sure".

Cronenberg first entered the body of mainstream cinema through the taboo orifices of the horror and soft-core porn genres. Having failed an audition as a porno director for Canadian skin-flicks company Cinepix, Cronenberg interested producer John Dunning in a script for a "serious horror film" entitled *Orgy of the Blood Parasites*. Seen by Dunning as a chance to break into the US mainstream market, Cronenberg's feature debut was shot using financing raised by Cinepix from the Canadian Film Development Corporation, under the new title *The Parasite Murders*. This less lurid moniker was subsequently changed to *Shivers* for worldwide release, except in the US, where the film was dubbed *They Came From Within*.

Decried by Canadian critic Marshall Delaney as "the most perverse disgusting film" he had ever seen, *Shivers* incurred the wrath of the US



Cronenberg's monsters: the Mugwamps of 'Naked Lunch'

censors and set new cinematic standards of shocking visual imagery. Audiences reeled at scenes of bloodied, phallic parasites emerging from the gaping mouths of their aroused human hosts and worming their intimate way into the bodies of new victims. To horror fans, Cronenberg was a major new voice; a talented renegade who blended the explicit sexuality of porn with the taboo-breaking shocks of traditional horror. To others, he was an outlandish visual pervert.

A stumbling block to Cronenberg's mainstream acceptance was surely his experimentation with 'plastic realities'; using latex moulds and special effects technology pioneered in the horror genre, Cronenberg developed powerful visual metaphors which were misinterpreted by many as simply the trademarks of gore cinema. For those receptive to such startling stimulation, however, Cronenberg became the master of the visual metaphor, using the plasticity of special effects to lend fleshy form to his conceptual scripts. In *The Brood*, bloated foetus-bags hanging from the body of Samantha Eggar spew forth murderous dwarfs, representing her uncontrollable rage and desire to destroy her stifling surroundings. Similarly in *Videodrome* (1982), as Max Renn (James Woods) becomes the slave of televisual imagery, so his stomach develops a suppurating vaginal VCR slot-wound and his television set french-kisses him into a netherworld of sado-masochistic delirium.

"It's appropriate that the movie of *Naked Lunch*, which is very much about writing and new realities that are made through the creative process, should present me again with this problem of metaphor", Cronenberg reflects. "This is something I struggle with all the time. The use of metaphor in literature is crucial, and there is no direct screen equivalent. Eisenstein tried a direct equivalent; when the script says 'The crowd roars like a lion', you cut

to a lion roaring. Does that work? No. It's silly, everybody laughs, it takes you out of the movie, and I'm glad Eisenstein did it so I don't have to! But what do you do when you want to deliver a concept that requires some kind of metaphor and you can't do it the way it's done on paper?

"Often I end up using special effects for just this purpose. There's a very specific example of this in *Naked Lunch* where we have a creature which evolves out of a typewriter that is all-sexual, a polymorphously perverse thing which leaps on the two people who have created it and participates in sex with them. That creature is really an allegorical being that you would probably call lust if you were writing in the fourteenth century. It would be the embodiment of the lust of these two people. So I'm doing something very literary there, but in a very cinematic way.

"However, I have to say that I'm not obsessed with special effects, and I believe that if I had conceived of a film like this or like *Videodrome* in the 50s, there would have been another way to do it that would have worked. I think that there would have been a way to deliver the metaphorical imagery that I've got in *Videodrome* without modern technology: it's the conceptual stuff which is hard, not the techno stuff. As far as *Naked Lunch* is concerned, I think the effects are pretty old fashioned - it's really just advanced puppetry. There are no computer-generated morphs the way there are in *T2*, for example. It's just foam-latex creatures operated with little springs and levers. *Naked Lunch* is set in 1953 and I think there's something very 50s about the effects. They have a very physical, right-there-on-the-set feel, which is exactly what they were. There was no post-production optical work, unlike *Dead Ringers*, which had much more sophisticated optical post-production".

The physicalisation of metaphor which Cro-

## Filmography

### David Cronenberg

born 15 May 1943, Toronto

#### Transfer

7 mins (1966)  
screenwriter/director of photography/editor/producer  
"It was a surreal little thing with people out in fields of snow, sitting at tables set with food and tablecloths as if they were inside... it was really an attempt to make a film based on my reading an encyclopedia and 'American Cinematographer'".

#### From the Drain

14 mins (1967)  
sc/ph/ed/p

"It's definitely more like a Samuel Beckett sketch. There are two guys sitting in a bathtub with their clothes on and no water in the tub. You begin to realise that they're veterans of some bizarre war that you don't really know anything about. Finally, a plant comes out through the drain and tries to strangle one of them. It's clumsy and technically not very good. I have tried to suppress it and make sure there are no prints available".

#### Stereo

65 mins (1969) sc/ph/ed/p

"I didn't write a script for 'Stereo', it was invented as it was being made... By the end I knew there was no point in doing an MA [in literature]. I wanted to do film".

#### Crimes of the Future

65 mins (1970) sc/ph/ed/p

"I talk about a world in which there are no women. Men have to absorb the femaleness that is gone from the planet. It can't just cease to exist because women aren't around".

#### Shivers, aka The Parasite

Murders, aka They Came From Within 87 mins (1974)

"Venereal disease is very pro-sex because no sex, no venereal disease. I know that some people think this is



#### Shivers

disgusting stuff, but in Shivers I was saying 'I love sex, but I love sex as a venereal disease. I am syphilis. I am enthusiastic about it, but in a very different way from you'".

#### Rabid

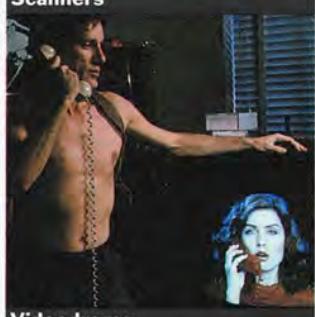
91 mins (1976) sc  
"I remember being totally bemused by the claim that I was portraying female sexuality as predatory. With 'Shivers' I had been attacked for portraying women as sexually passive. So I was beginning to realise that this was a no-win situation".

**Fast Company** 91 mins (1978) co-sc  
"Fast Company" is a really nice B-movie... I know that critically it doesn't fit in very well, but I think there's no body of work that really encompasses one human being. It would take an infinite amount of movies to explore every aspect of a person's life".

**The Brood** 91 mins (1979) sc



#### Scanners



#### Videodrome

"It's my version of 'Kramer vs Kramer'... It insisted on being made in a very personal way. It's as close to literal autobiography as I've ever come, and I hope I don't come that close again. I can't tell you how satisfying the climax is. I wanted to strangle my ex-wife".

#### Scanners

103 mins (1980) sc  
"I'm feeling much more optimistic about things in general. Now that I'm feeling good, I'm exploding heads, just like any other young, normal North American boy".

#### Videodrome

89 mins (1982) sc  
"I wanted to posit the possibility that a man exposed to violent imagery would begin to hallucinate. I wanted to see what it would be like, in fact, if the censors were saying would happen did happen. What would it feel like? What would it lead to?"

#### The Dead Zone

103 mins (1983)  
"I was aware of the whole concept of me as a writer/director – an auteur in the French sense. I could have driven myself crazy wondering what the French critics would think of me doing something I hadn't written myself... For some reason, I said 'Yes'".

#### The Fly

96 mins (1986) co-sc  
"The essence of 'The Fly' was to say, 'We're going to do this and show it to you. It's not going to be easy, but if you

look at it, it's going to take you someplace else'. It was never just gloop; it was conceptual gloop".

#### Dead Ringers

115 mins (1988) co-sc/co-p

"'Dead Ringers' to me is as close to a classical tragedy as I've ever come, in that it's inevitable right from the opening what the twins' destiny will be. And as with any tragedy, there's something magnificent, or elegiacally beautiful, or somehow comforting, despite the fact that it's very sad. If we are to see our lives as possibly being beautiful or complete, then this is what we have to come to terms with, because we all die... Any other way is an illusion, and a cruel illusion at that".

#### Naked Lunch

115 mins (1991) sc

## Television Credits

Fillers for Canadian TV p/sc

#### Jim Ritchie Sculptor

(1971) Letter from Michaelangelo

#### Tourettes

(1971) Don Valley

(1972) Fort York

(1972) Lakeshore

(1972) Winter Garden

(1972) Scarborough Bluffs

(1972) In the Dirt

(1972) Secret Weapons

27 mins (1972) ph

Often described by Cronenberg as "my suppressed film", made for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Program X by Cronenberg's company, Emergent Films.

#### The Victim

27 mins (1975) The Lie Chair

27 mins (1975) For Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Peep Show)

#### The Italian Machine

28 mins (1976) For Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Teleplay)

#### The Faith Healer

47 mins (1988) For Paramount TV (Friday the Thirteenth: The Series)

#### Hydro

47 mins (1988) Commercial for Ontario Hydro

#### Caramilk

30 seconds (1990) Two commercials for William Nelson

#### Nike

30 seconds (1990) Commercial for Nike International

#### Regina vs Horvath

48 mins (1990) For Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Scales of Justice)

#### Regina vs Logan

44 mins (1991) For Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (Scales of Justice)

Sources: 'Cronenberg on Cronenberg'

(ed Chris Rodley), 'The Shape of Rage'

(ed Piers Handling) and various

interviews. Filmography compiled by

Kim Newman and Mark Kermode



#### Dead Ringers

nenberg describes is indeed the most powerful recurrent motif within his films. When writer Piers Handling stole the title of Dr Raglan's fictional text book, *The Shape of Rage*, for his 1983 collection of essays on Cronenberg, he rightly pin-pointed the director's greatest achievement – to give physical form to shapeless anxieties. Yet his depiction of physical aberration and change is always metaphorical, never realistic. So how does this metaphorical use of viruses marry with Burroughs' very real and practical use of drugs to encourage psychic (and perhaps even physical) transformation?

"I don't think that Burroughs' drug-taking produces his creativity or indeed allows him to create", Cronenberg states assuredly. "I know that he could do it without drugs and indeed he often does do it without drugs or alcohol or anything else. Also, Burroughs' fascination with drug-taking precedes his writing by many years. I think really his drug-taking had to do with a dissatisfaction with the reality in which he found himself living, including what he himself was. He wanted to transform himself. He wanted to become something else. Drug-taking was one way to do that, and it also put him in touch with outsiders in society whom he found more interesting than the middle classes from which he came".

"The state that I prefer is stone cold sober. When I get drunk, or on the rare occasions that I've been stoned, I just sit around waiting for it to go away. It's like a fever that I want to get over. I don't have trouble when I'm sober or straight tapping into the dream/fantasy part of myself. I don't need anything to liberate me. Even when dealing with hallucinatory states, as I do in *Naked Lunch*, I am always striving for a kind of clarity. Anything that muddies the clarity and makes it more difficult to synthesise things is something I'd rather not have".

"Burroughs is not like that; he enjoys smoking dope and he likes the connections he makes when he's stoned, and he uses them in his work. I don't make any connections I think are valuable. I just get very paranoid and wait for it to go away. At that point you're really dealing with your own personal metabolism and nervous system".

"When I'm writing I do go into a trance-like state which I can be in and out of in an instant. However, one thing about this altered state is that it's not physical. It's a kind of out-of-body thing which everybody experiences. People think of it as mysterious, but I've often got to the point where I have to check the toothbrush to see if it's wet because I can't remember whether I've brushed my teeth or not. My body has been functioning on its own, while my mind is somewhere else".

"So I guess I don't think of that creative process at the moment as needing or involving bodily change. But having said that, I think it would be interesting to attach electrodes to your head and find out what's actually going on when you're writing. Because you are experiencing these things as a kind of reality... albeit at a distance".

*Naked Lunch* opens on 24 April.

From the 20s to 'La Belle Noiseuse', the father-daughter relationship is a powerful presence in French cinema, argues Ginette Vincendeau as she examines films from Renoir through New Wave to 'cinéma beur'

# Family plots

## The fathers and daughters of French cinema



Jacques Rivette's *La Belle Noiseuse* and Luc Besson's *Nikita* are two recent French films that would appear to have little in common. The former is by a New Wave director and has all the hallmarks of a 'difficult' auteur film – four hours long, not much happening on the surface, but we read it as a profound reflection on artistic creation. One of its acknowledged sources is a short story by Balzac. *Nikita*, by contrast, is a popular, fast-paced 'post-modern' thriller, borrowing its aesthetics from music videos and advertisements. One of its acknowledged sources is an Elton John song. Yet these films share one important feature: the relationship between their beautiful young heroines and a controlling father figure. This symbolic, or in some cases actual father-daughter axis constitutes a 'master-narrative' which French cinema has repeatedly returned to, challenged or reworked.

*La Belle Noiseuse* and *Nikita* contain many of the elements that characterise this configuration. For example, each initially presents its heroine as rebellious: Marianne (Emmanuelle Béart) in *La Belle Noiseuse* refuses to pose for Frenhofer (Michel Piccoli), a famous painter whom her boyfriend wishes to please. Mysteriously, she then changes her mind, despite her valid objection that her boyfriend (and the movie?) has "sold her arse". Most of the rest of the film is taken up with Frenhofer forcing her naked body into increasingly uncomfortable poses. The eponymous *Nikita* (Anne Parillaud) is a criminal and drug addict, and the first scene shows her blowing out a policeman's brains with a gun. After her arrest she is offered freedom in exchange for selling her body and soul to the (futuristic) state; there follows a painful rehabilitation programme to turn her into a contract killer at the beck and call of her mentor, Bob (Tchéky Karyo). Both Piccoli and Karyo are clearly paternal authority figures at whose hands the young women undergo a humiliating and regressive process. (*Nikita* does much sobbing and snivelling and at one point cries for her mother.) *La Belle Noiseuse* is more subtle, but Frenhofer does subject Marianne to his will, in the name of his art, culminating in a pose with clear echoes of crucifixion. The painting we never see could be a record of this sadistic process.

The sadism with which the men treat the young women is in direct proportion to (and therefore a disavowal of) the sexual attraction they feel for them, heightened by the women's rebelliousness. Yet at the same time the men display a protective concern: in this Oedipal game, they are 'mothers' as well as 'fathers'. Bob slaps *Nikita* in the face and puts her through a brutal training programme; he also buys her cakes and gifts. After a day of gruelling posing, Marianne is offered bed and board by a kindly, non-threatening Frenhofer. But the films take the symbolic father-daughter relationship even further. When Bob visits *Nikita* and her young boyfriend, he pretends to be her uncle, and his nostalgic evocation of her imaginary childhood – when she used to have ribbons in her hair and a long plait – is in ►



**Seductive stories:**  
Rivette's 'La Belle  
Noiseuse', and  
Besson's 'Nikita'  
may have radically  
different sources  
and aesthetics, but  
they both share an  
obsession with a  
relationship between

an older man and  
a young woman,  
in which the man  
behaves sadistically  
and the woman rebels.  
Michel Piccoli and  
Emmanuelle Béart  
in 'La Belle Noiseuse',  
right; Anne Parillaud  
in 'Nikita', above

► excess of the requirements of narrative. Marianne in *La Belle Noiseuse* takes her place as the 'daughter' of the childless Frenhofer couple, replacing Frenhofer's wife, Liz (Jane Birkin), as muse and model. Liz is rubbed out of the painting to make way for Marianne in a bid by Frenhofer to renew his blocked creativity.

Liz's erasure from both the narrative and the work of art is indicative of the position to which the father-daughter axis relegates the mature woman: obsolete, or a token figure, like the Jeanne Moreau character in *Nikita*. It is also typical of the master-narrative that in both films the young men (in each case the heroines' boyfriends) are displaced. Though Nicolas (David Bursztein) in *La Belle Noiseuse* is initially responsible for bringing Marianne and Frenhofer together, he subsequently disappears from the narrative. In both films, the young men are insubstantial, infantilised figures who play second fiddle to the older men, while the young lovers are depicted as 'children': Nikita and Marco (Jean-Hugues Anglade) 'play house'; we realise at the end of *La Belle Noiseuse* that Nicolas' affair with Marianne took the place of his incestuous relationship with his sister.

A surprising number of French films of the last decade take up the father-daughter storyline, with seduction scenarios which sometimes go as far as incest. Serge Gainsbourg's *Charlotte For Ever* stars himself and his own daughter, whom he also celebrated in his song 'Lemon Incest'; Jacques Doillon's *La Puritaine* explores the semi-incestuous feelings between a father (Piccoli again) and his daughter (Sandrine Bonnaire); Bertrand Blier's *Beau-père* and Jacques Demy's *Trois places pour le 26* treat the same subject. Other films give centre stage to the relationship between a 'father' and his 'daughter' in a more symbolic fashion: Maurice Pialat's *A nos amours*; Claude Miller's *Mortelle randonnée* (in which Michel Serrault transfers on to Isabelle Adjani his obsessive feelings for his dead daughter); Jean Becker's *L'Eté meurtrier*; the Jean-Paul Belmondo comedy, *Joyeuses Pâques*, in which he pretends that his lover (Sophie Marceau) is his daughter in order to appease his wife. Even the long-running French soap *Chateaupallion* centres on the relationship between Antonin Berg (the head of the central 'dynasty') and his favourite child, Florence.

How can the preponderance of this pattern, which cuts across both popular and art movies of the 80s, be explained? Undoubtedly the fact that in French cinema it is generally men who hold power, while notions of feminine beauty are associated with youth, is a starting point, as is the fact that most films are now targeted at a youth audience. And certainly as the directors of the New Wave – Godard, Rivette, Rohmer – have got older, their heroines have become younger, a situation that reproduces the imbalanced gender power relation at the roots of the father-daughter narrative.

A classic reflectionist view would look at how these stories echo developments in contemporary French society: surely this obsession by male directors with the father, the exclusion of the mature woman and her replace-

ment by a 'nymphet' has something to do with anxieties about female power? Though blatant sexism in both the media and everyday interaction persists in France, women have managed to enter the corridors of power in greater numbers than in most other western countries. And genetic engineering and changes in the inheritance laws have put the position of the father within the family in crisis, to the point where Fathers Associations have sprung up to fight women for child custody.

However tempting it might be to see the father-daughter scenario as a response to recent social changes, the theme in fact has a long history in French culture, going back to the eighteenth-century fairy tale (*La Belle et la Bête*) and the great nineteenth-century realist-melodramatic novels by Balzac, Hugo and Zola. Some of Colette's novels (*Gigi*, *L'Ingénue libertine*) continued the tradition, with her *gaminnes* and their 'uncles' or mature 'cousins'.

The pattern began to appear in classical French cinema in the 20s – Abel Gance's *La Roue*; Jean Renoir's *La Fille de l'eau* – and was taken up with renewed enthusiasm in the 30s and 40s. Marc Allégret's *Gribouille*, Marcel Pagnol's *La Femme du boulanger*, Jeff Musso's *Dernière jeunesse* and Julien Duvivier's *Panique* (remade as *Monsieur Hire*) explicitly dramatise the conflict of the aging man (played by Raimu in the first three of these examples) torn between his erotic and his protective feelings towards a daughter, stepdaughter, adopted waif or very young wife. The influence of *Les Misérables* is clear, and indeed its hero Jean Valjean, embodied by Harry Baur, Jean Gabin, Lino Ventura et al., has haunted French cinema with his quest for his 'daughter' Cosette.

The *risqué* aspect of the story was exploited in comedies of the period, epitomised by the adapted boulevard play *Arlette et ses papas*, in which the hero (Jules Berry) marries a woman he believes to be his daughter (though the spectator knows she is not). This trend continued in the 50s, notably with a series of Jean Gabin films including *La Marie du port*, *Des Gens sans importance* and *Voici le temps des assassins*. The dialogue emphasises the point: "We'll tell them I'm your father", Gabin says to Nicole Courcel, whom he is about to marry at the end of *La Marie du port*; "I could be your father" to Françoise Arnoul in *Des Gens sans importance*. The most famous in the series is *En cas de malheur*, in which his protective attitude towards his young lover (Brigitte Bardot) goes as far as spoon-feeding her and blowing her nose.

As the above examples, with the repeated appearance of actors such as Raimu and Gabin, make clear, casting is crucial to perpetuating the motif. And the creation of stars known for certain roles dictated the writing of new parts. Hence the reign of mature actors and young actresses. Following the success of films like *L'Effrontée*, *A nos amours* and *Betty Blue* in the 80s, directors seemed only to want very young women – Béart, Bonnaire, Sophie Marceau, Béatrice Dalle, Juliette Binoche – while older stars like Catherine Deneuve and Jeanne Moreau tended to be wheeled in for cameos, as was

As the directors of the New Wave, Godard, Rivette and Rohmer, have got older, their heroines have become younger



Duvivier's 'Panique':  
Vivian Romance  
with Michel Simon  
as an aging man with  
conflicting feelings

Moreau in *Nikita*. On the other hand, older male actors – Belmondo, Depardieu, Piccoli, Noiret, Rochefort, Delon, Montand – thrive. As the French magazine, *Première*, put it: "Three leading parts in one year is almost unknown for an actress, but is common among actors". Two of the most successful French films of the 80s, *Jean de Florette* and *Manon des Sources*, typify the trend. Yves Montand as Le Papet stepped into the shoes of Raimu and Gabin to play the troubled patriarch, while Depardieu and other mature male actors were played against the very young Manon (Béart).

Cultural sources, social climate and institutional forces thus conspire to perpetuate a pattern in which fathers dominate very young women (in the process excluding mature women). Yet there have been moments of rebellion. The early films of the French New Wave –



Godard's 'A bout de souffle': Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo in a relationship where 'daddy' is displaced by a younger man

Right, Autant-Lara's 'En cas de malheur': Jean Gabin and Brigitte Bardot in the most famous of the films where Gabin plays the 'father'. Below, Marcel Pagnol's 'La Femme du boulanger': an early portrait of an aging man's erotic feelings towards a young woman



*A bout de souffle*, *Les 400 coups*, *Le Beau Serge* and so on – echoing the generational attack of their young male film-makers briefly displaced 'daddy' from the screen in favour of narratives that revolved around young men. Following May '68 and the rise of feminism, the more politically oriented cinema of the 70s produced some women-centred movies (*Céline et Julie vont en bateau*, *La Fiancée du pirate*, *Nathalie Granger*), while mainstream cinema and the classic stories provided 'strong', mature heroines, embodied by actresses such as Annie Girardot (*Mourir d'aimer*) and Miou-Miou (*La Femme flic*). The 80s, however, brought a noticeable return to the mature man/young girl pattern; director Aline Isserman in 1986 declared herself appalled by the "infantilism" of the female characters in the scripts she was given to read.

Isserman is herself part of a contingent of

women directors whose work represents a challenge to the master-narrative, in part through a shift in focus to the mother and mother-daughter relationship. In Diane Kurys' and Chantal Akerman's films, it is the father who is marginal or absent; if there is an authority figure for the young Mona (Bonnaire) in Agnès Varda's *Sans toit ni loi*, it is Mme Lantier (Macha Méril). Women directors have also worked towards breaking the mould of traditional casting by creating parts for mature actresses. Marie-Claude Treilhou's recent *Le Jour des rois* features Danielle Darrieux, Micheline Presle and Paulette Dubost; Nelly Kaplan's *Plaisir d'amour* has three generations of women.

Some women directors also tackle the father-daughter scenario from the daughter's point of view – for example, Catherine Breillat's *Virgin*, an exploration of the first sexual

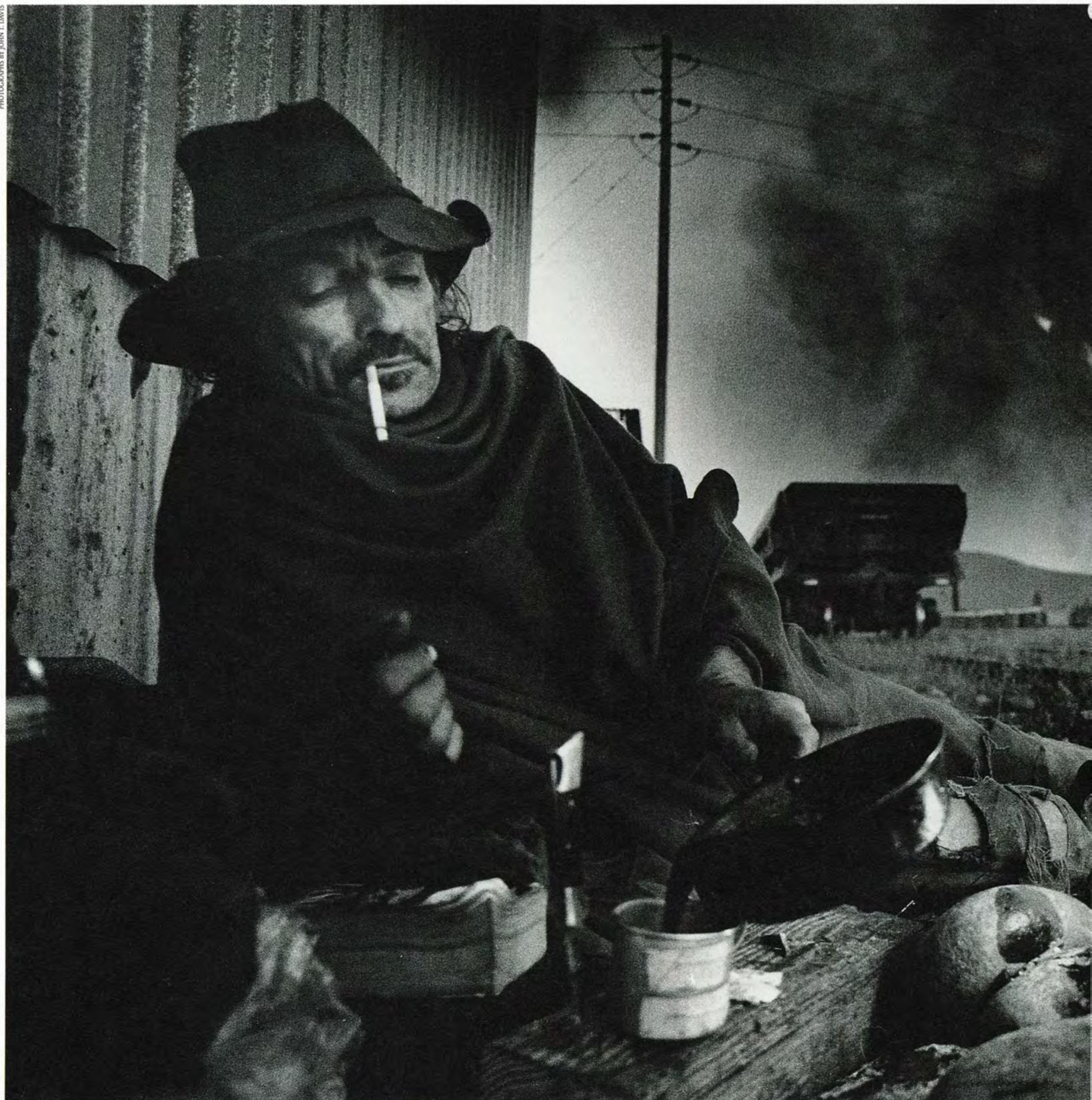
experiences of a fourteen-year-old girl and her ambivalent feelings about her attraction to a forty-year-old man. Bertrand Tavernier's *Daddy Nostalgia*, based on his ex-wife Colo Tavernier's semi-autobiographical text, explores the tragedy of the exclusion of the mother from the closeness of the bond between father (Dirk Bogarde) and daughter (Birkin), rather than presenting it as given.

Other 80s French films which challenge the reign of the father are the *cinéma beur* (beur is slang for Arab), made by second generation North African emigrants. *Beur* films such as Mehdi Charef's *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* and Abdelkrim Bahloul's *Le Thé à la menthe* document the demise of the father as a result of the culture shock and racism experienced by first generation emigrants to France. The mothers here emerge as central figures, both in the social world and in the imaginary one which links the Arab motherland and the French *patrie*. But male *beur* directors tend to display little gender awareness in their representation of their young heroes. Strikingly different (though not strictly *beur*, since made by a Jewish North African emigrant) is Charlotte Silvera's *Louise l'insoumise*, the aptly titled depiction of a young girl's rebellion against the Jewish law of the father.

*Beur* women living in France have rarely had access to major film-making resources, so the merging of gender and post-colonial concerns tends to be found most strongly in films made by white French women. Though working for the most part in a classical idiom, these directors confront the gender and racial systems of mainstream French cinema. Claire Denis' *Chocolat*, Brigitte Rouan's *Outremer* and Marie-France Pisier's *Le Bal du gouverneur* take the spectator back to the directors' childhoods in the 40s and 50s, which coincided with the onset of decolonisation. In *Chocolat* and *Le Bal*, the figure of the mother is the crucial point of reference; in *Outremer* it is a community of sisters.

The challenges to the father-daughter master-narrative have come from avant-garde or politically committed film-makers, from women, or from second generation immigrants – in other words, from those in marginal positions. In a truly 'post-modern' era, it is possible that mainstream French cinema will cease to exist and that these marginal positions will inhabit the central (albeit fragmented) arena. Even Rivette with *La Belle Noiseuse* and Besson with *Nikita* were not impervious to change. Whereas the rebellious daughters of the 'daddy's cinema' of the 30s, 40s and 50s had to return to the patriarchal fold (and bed), as in *La Femme du boulanger*, or come to a grim end, as in *Des Gens sans importance* and *En cas de malheur*, those of *La Belle Noiseuse* and *Nikita* escape and leave their 'fathers' behind.

Meanwhile, in classical mainstream French cinema the master-narrative persists, epitomised by one of Gérard Depardieu's latest popular comedies. The story of his ambivalent relationship with his teenage daughter, it is entitled *Mon père, ce héros* (My father, this hero). 'La Belle Noiseuse' opens on 20 March.



# On the road

Timid television film-making is challenged by two remarkable films in a new BBC documentary series, argues James Saynor



One of the 'fathers' of documentary film-making was a Briton. And British television - with its strong commitment to non-fiction output - is known to be 'the best television in the world'. So it would seem that British television should be a natural spawning ground for innovation and advance in the documentary field.

Many in the vain world of UK television would go along with this syllogism as soon as show you their drawers full of international awards. But the sad reality is that small-screen documentaries over here - especially at the BBC - have not properly capitalised on the creative legacy of the likes of John Grierson, Humphrey Jennings and Denis Mitchell. Even more disappointing is that thanks to the resistance to change to be found in British broadcasting institutions, the great theoretical and technical leaps of foreign documentarists have often remained customs-bound at Dover.

There's little evidence that factual output trainees at, say, the BBC are well versed in the varied thinking of Robert Flaherty, Dziga Vertov, Jean Rouch or Richard Leacock. The dominant form of British television documentary remains the 'lecture film' - a series of images coercively mediated by a well-researched commentary or series of hit-and-run, news-style interviews. This, indeed, is what most viewers would think of as a 'documentary', even though it may amount to little more than educational or current affairs television with social pretensions. The more cinematically interesting styles - which can be grouped under the heading 'spontaneous documentary' - have emerged only tardily in Britain, and then have often been marginalised or absorbed into the lecture circuit in a diluted form.

Spontaneous documentary has two key attributes. First, it's less interested in journalistic data than in psychological or sociological undercurrents - the supra-factual 'truths' about the human condition pursued by most art. Second, it laboriously clears space for the viewer to 'enter' the film and bounce his or her psyche off those caught by the camera; the text is relatively open, the film-maker's attitude exploratory. In the Gradgrindian world of British factual television, where the documentary tends to be seen as a wing of journalism rather than a wing of cinema, the spontaneous approach has had a hard time gaining a foothold.

One branch of it - Leacock-style, fly-on-the-wall 'direct cinema' - was controversially imported into Britain in the 70s, but has now largely died out in its more pure form (except

in the work of Diane Tammes). The other, rival branch - Rouch-style *cinéma vérité*, where the film-maker intervenes in events in the manner of a therapist-cum-jester - lives on in the output of film school graduates such as Nick Broomfield and Molly Dineen (and in guest appearances by Marcel Ophuls), but hardly has a central place in the culture. For much of the time, British television documentaries are sunk in stylistic insularity and indeterminacy, mixing and mismatching elements of the spontaneous documentary and the lecture film in series like BBC2's *40 Minutes*, ITV's *First Tuesday* and Channel 4's *Cutting Edge*.

To be fair to ITV, the commercial network has historically been less 'objectivity' obsessed than the BBC, and has given birth to a number of interesting talents over the years - perhaps particularly exponents of the *engagé*, Griersonian division of the lecture film, such as Mike Grigsby, Ken Loach and Nick Downie. And to be fair to Channel 4, the innovation station has also done much to foster the more flavoursome of non-fiction formats, and to let important international work through customs. Most significantly, though, there are now twitches in the barometer at the BBC.

True, an experimental, *cinéma vérité* series such as last year's *From Wimpy to Warriors* (masterminded by Paul Watson, perhaps our most eminent active documentarist) can be cruelly lambasted within the Corporation. But there have also been advances, including the arrival this year of *Fine Cut* - a series of ten feature-length documentaries, independently made but appreciably financed by BBC2, and designed as an implicit challenge to the dogged styles of in-house, home-grown fare.

The BBC pointsman for *Fine Cut* is André Singer, who says he's after "the documentary as art" and pointedly inscribes Grierson's dictum that documentary should be "the creative interpretation of actuality" on the front of his promotional material. The attitude of the series to equality of opportunity is a bit on the creative side, too: only one of the thirteen film authors credited comes from the UK, and only one is a woman. Singer says that these skewings should be put right by the second series, while suggesting (to my mind, inaccurately) that in any case, few Britishers are good at the feature-length 'documentary as art'.

The series, which runs until 4 April, certainly puts the form through a few bend-and-stretch exercises, though within the seven I've been able to preview, overall quality is variable. (Of those so far transmitted, I wasn't able to ►



**Always on the road:**  
**Bear grease and**  
**flaming landscape,**  
**opposite, and the**  
**railway, left - the**  
**refuge of the itinerant**  
**and subject of endless**  
**songs - in John**  
**T. Davis' 'Hobo', which**  
**treats a sometimes**  
**grim reality with**  
**imaginistic aestheticism**

◀ see Stephen Olsson and Scott Andrews' *Last Images of War* or Werner Herzog's *Lessons of Darkness*.) Two of them, however – John T. Davis' *Hobo* and Jean-Pierre Gorin's *My Crazy Life* – are true revelations.

The film with the fewest pretensions to 'art' is Otto Olejar's *The Forgotten Men* – in effect, a lecture film without commentary, indignantly tracing the harrowing fate of those persecuted in Czechoslovakia for serving with the RAF during the war. Peter Adair's *Absolutely Positive* is a series of interviews with eleven Americans diagnosed as HIV-positive, shot on tape in bristly 'video diary' fashion. It qualifies as *cinéma vérité* in that Adair's careful preparation and empathetic questioning (he is himself infected with HIV) elicits confessional responses you wouldn't get with such precision from standard television interviewing. Sometimes the subjects come over as brave and resourceful, sometimes shattered and desperate.

Visually just as plain, and editorially rather more barren, is *Innocents Abroad*, shot and directed by Les Blank. The difference between the lecture film and the spontaneous documentary might be compared to the difference between going around Florence and Rome with a tour guide and striking off into the back-streets on your own. The second option would give you a fuller experience, an awareness of what makes the places tick on a human level. But the drawback is that you'd miss out on the historical overview – the factual background that the lecture film thrives on. Even a badly done lecture film, however, is more use than a badly done spontaneous film, as umpteen pseudo-spontaneous editions of *40 Minutes* will certify – and, sadly, it's into this latter category that *Innocents Abroad* falls. As it happens, the topic of the film is a package tour by a bovine group of American holidaymakers of Florence, Rome and a numbing array of other European culture spots.

The fact that such a whistle-stop hoovering-up of foreign facts and trivia by the tourists is a questionable exercise is established in the opening few minutes, and from here on there's nowhere much else for the bus to go. If the point is made that the tourists learn nothing about the true textures of Europe, Blank's film is equally unexploratory and narrowly reproductive of surface reality. It barely qualifies as 'direct cinema': structurally, it's much too choppy; worse, events become increasingly explained by an *ad hoc* narrator in the form of the dapper English tour guide, Mark – the very 'lecturer' you'd think the film ought to be opposed to.

*Pictures from a Revolution*, by Susan Meiselas, Richard P. Rogers and Alfred Guzzetti, is assembled with even more constrictions. It's an *engagé* lecture film in which the award-winning stills photographer Meiselas returns to Nicaragua with the book of photographs she shot during the overthrow of Somoza a decade earlier. We see her brandishing her glossy portfolio in front of *campesinos*, Sandinista cadres and Contra guerrillas, all of whom are much moved by the photographic record. But for our

part, the old stills are flashed by us like they're on a Rolodex: the jolts from the past clearly flood out the consciousness of Meiselas and her subjects, though such motor-drive rostrum work can't help but leave us feeling excluded. The film is mediated by Meiselas' highly personal, semi-improvised commentary, delivered in an anguished *sotto voce*.

Meiselas takes it for granted that we know the history of the recent Nicaraguan wars (which won't apply to younger viewers), and gives us some sketchy musings on photography's sketchy meanings, though for a crisper discussion of the ethics of foreign journalists covering Central American wars you'd probably be better off watching Oliver Stone's *Salvador* (1986). At one point, the film gets a disabled ex-Contra to deliver an eloquent, Oliver North-style paean to his brothers in arms, but this open-minded, *cinéma vérité*-like insight is rare, and the documentary's liberal credentials quickly reassert themselves. The record of the Ortega regime is skated over, and the film concludes with the woolly asseveration: "For some of us who watched [the war], what we lost was the luxury of a dream. But for the Nicaraguans it was much more".

A branch of spontaneous documentary not so far mentioned is the 'imagistic film', in which the documentary as art comes closest to the documentary as painting (or as symphony). It was the branch famously trashed by Grierson for its introverted 'aesthetic decadence' and the one that, perhaps as a result, has had the hardest time getting established in the mainstream. *Fine Cut* provides two striking examples of the form.

*Forest of Bliss* was made in the mid-80s by the anthropological film-maker Robert Gardner (director of the landmark *Dead Birds* in 1963), and acquired off the shelf by the BBC. It's a tranced-out collage of sounds and images – entirely without annotation, even in the form of subtitled translations – recorded at Benares, on the banks of the River Ganges, the site of a cremation ground where beautiful and macabre Hindu funeral rites can be observed.

Gardner paints Benares as an urban society from the first millennium, largely devoid of twentieth-century dressings. People spend much of the day in spiritually onanistic reveries – in a communality of cantillations, obsequies, blessings, wettings and kindlings. Their intimacy with the process of post-mortem dissolution is clearly cathartic to them, if disturbing to us. Colours are iridescent, sounds tintinnabulous; in one remarkable scene, bell-jingling

monkeys gambol over the decayed, rose-red stonework of a temple while spacey penitents disport themselves below.

But the film (which Gardner shot and edited) is also short-winded and shapeless in construction, within its vaguely 'symphonic', dawn-to-dusk chronology. And Gardner muffs the film's 'obligatory' scenes: we don't see much quayside cremation going on at all. Worse, the documentary's studied abstraction has the overall effect of datedly romanticising the South as ethnographically unknowable and timelessly 'exotic'. At the end, as a boat melts into the blue river mist, whence one had mysteriously materialised at the start, we're left with little more of a sense of these people's lives and attitudes than we might get from a flying visit by *Wish You Were Here*?

A more fluent exponent of the imagistic film is the Belfast-born John T. Davis, who applies an equally luminous aestheticism to ruthlessly down-home topics. His work, which is startlingly non-judgmental, seems even more personal than Gardner's. The Davis quest for compositional beauty – both visual and aural – is a search for life patterns and numinous moments that relate to his own, inner spiritual yearnings, which we might wonder at but can never entirely share. At the same time, Davis' films contrive to be highly accessible and often highly entertaining.

*Hobo* – which has much conventional documentary material in it, alongside the imagism – is a portrait of a grizzled wanderer named Beargrease, who crisscrosses the northern steppes of the United States by freight train on long flights from his home in Seattle. Photographed by Davis and David Barker, the film is full of mesmeric topographical shots familiar from earlier Davis films. They draw attention to the joins between sky and land, and between town and country – aurora dawns and sunsets; human haulage ploughing across the flat horizon; winking city nightscapes; the ragged urban fringe; lightning storms; traffic signals and fluorescent service stations; giant signs standing gaunt in vacant landscapes.

It's a Steinbeckian vision of Middle America (as though shot by Nestor Almendros), and on a human level Davis is much interested in the wayward individualism of the Steinbeckian 'little man' struggling against the weight of American economics and the pull of the American Dream. The boxcar philosopher Beargrease takes upon himself narrating duties for much of the film. Looking like a cross between Stig of the Dump and Indiana Jones, he strikes us at first as simply a cranky self-mythologiser. But then his curious existential rigmaroles win us over, making a moving – if not always coherent – case for self-awareness via total, blissed-out anonymity and the refuge of the rails. Passing through Nowherevilles like Minot, North Dakota and Spokane, Washington, Beargrease runs into various other deadbeats and drifters, including a crazed, evangelical dumpster-riffler. And then there is an astonishing figure claiming to be a former advertising executive, who tells how he became a down-and-out after

**Davis mixes the on-the-lam stuff, as his camera hops illegally aboard the trains, with tripod shots of the wide blue yonder**

**John T. Davis** is one of the British Isles' most lucid and original documentary film-makers. The ruminative-visionary style of his films is respected within British TV's London power base, if hardly understood. Born forty-four years ago in Northern Ireland, where he still lives, to an artist mother and a father who designed cinemas, Davis took up movies in the mid-70s by fooling around with an 8mm camera his uncle had left him. After a spell teaching art and making industrial films, he came to wider attention at the end of the decade with 'Shellshock Rock' (1979), a controversial portrait of the Belfast punk scene.

Two other films on the same topic followed, but his real breakthrough into something approaching the mainstream was the epic, formally astonishing 'Route 66', made for Central TV in 1985. This 104-minute pot-pourri of sense perceptions is a wry homage to the carnival of culture, commerce and working-class endeavour associated with the famous American highway (as was). Davis' meticulous, impressionistic style was further refined in films like 'Power in the Blood' (BBC, 1989), about a glory-shouting evangelist and singer from Tennessee on tour in Northern Ireland; and 'Dust on the Bible' (Channel 4, 1990), a brooding, meteorologically vivid portrait of Ulster preacher men, shot over a period of eight years. Davis discovered *Beargrease*, the train-jumping itinerant in his new film, 'Hobo', after reading an article about him in 'Harper's' magazine.

"A film has to be so important to you if you're going to devote a year of your life to it. I've always tried to explore aspects of myself through making films on things I think I need to know about. There's an endless kind of longing and searching in these films. They're about travelling,



**Transient existences: Davis and Beargrease, the subject of 'Hobo'**

and the horizon is way behind the screen somewhere.

"The two films about Northern Ireland were both connected with being drawn into a search for my own background, having been born and raised in a Protestant family. It wasn't a strict upbringing – but at the same time that kind of severe, fundamentalist ethic infiltrates your life, it's so much part of this country. So I'm trying to make some kind of statement, however abstract, about that.

"The idea of making a film about hoboes goes back a long time. I've always been interested in the underbelly of life, and in transient existences. I became aware of that whole culture through music, really, going back to Woody Guthrie, and then on to rock 'n' roll. Every song has trains in it, practically, once you tune into it.

"I identify strongly with those kinds of people – tramps and preachers. I don't know if being Irish has anything to do with it: they say the Irish have no iron in them because there's no iron in the soil, so they can't be grounded. And growing up in Northern Ireland, there's always been a strong influence from America – far more than you'd get in England. The dominant music here is country and western. So many people have left here to go to America

that when I first went it was almost like I'd been there before – not so much in New York, but in the West.

"Structuring the material in my films usually takes a while. There's a loose structure at the time of shooting: I don't shoot willy-nilly all over the place, and then try to make sense of it all in the cutting room. You have to have a structure to start with, in order to deviate from that structure – to approach it with a fresh attitude when you get into the cutting room. You have to be free enough to let the film start talking back to you. I used to have a quote from D. A. Pennebaker blown up on the cutting room wall: 'I use situations that are real. But the films are an imagined dream of what really happened'. I felt I related to that. You have to expand and contract reality.

"Most of the money I've ever got has come from London. I never see these films as being made for television, though. I'm not interested in making television programmes as such, with standard rules and standard slots. I don't know how British television regards me; I'd see myself as an Irish film-maker, basically – not in a political sense, but in a geographical sense. When you go to England, you know you're a stranger, you know you're in a different place".

he killed his family in a drunken auto accident. Davis expertly melds speech and image, stasis and movement – the on-the-lam stuff, as his camera hops illegally aboard the trains in countless marshalling yards, and the incandescent tripod shots of the wide blue yonder. This blending is aided by a score that incorporates Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and the keening sound sculptures of Philip Donnelly. For all the intimacy of the film, though, the film-maker's overt, physical presence in the material is nowhere to be found – so this is artistry hardly

of a piece with the manipulative wiles that characterise *cinéma vérité*.

For this, we need to turn to Jean-Pierre Gorin's *My Crazy Life*, which sits four square within the realm of Rouch-style, classic French *vérité* – not altogether surprisingly, coming from this former associate of Godard and the Dziga Vertov group. The film (titled *My Crasy Life!* in the opening credits) is a terrifying examination of a Samoan-American youth gang in the suburban ghettos of West Los Angeles, the members of which have much the same ballis-

tically wised-up, 'homeboy' culture as the denizens of South-Central LA we saw in *Boyz N the Hood* (1991). Here, though, the portrait is unmoralistic and without sentimentality.

The BBC viewer is addressed near the start, with characteristic brusqueness, by a gang member: "Fuck y'all doing here?... BBC, PBS, all that *National Geographic* bullshit! I tell you where it's at!" The licence payers might be further intrigued to know that some of their subscription money has been used by Gorin and his producer (anthropologist Daniel Marks) to buy their way into the affections of the Long Beach 'S' gang. The result, though, turns out to be filmically well worth it.

The original idea was to get the homeys to re-enact little incidents from their 'gang-banging' lives, although only a few of these (rather clumsy) sequences seem to have survived. But we do see them engaged in their taunting strut-and-stomp rituals; preparing for a night out by doing the ironing and tooling up with sub-machine guns; being stalked by the cops; recording their rap anthem, courtesy of the film-makers ("When I grab a gun, I love to have fun. Boom! Boom! Boom! When I get hectic, expect the unexpected!"); and visiting Hawaii, where some of their peers have been exiled by their families. Gorin shows us police stills of kids with their heads blown off to index actual street violence, none of which we witness.

The film is as deliriously disorganised and semi-hinged as any purist piece of *cinéma vérité* – as Rouch's *Chronique d'un été* (1961), for example. As in *Chronique*, probing interviews (by one of the older members of the gang) are the catalyst for powerful insights into the subjects' mentalities; and we see the 'S' posse viewing and reacting to some of the material already shot. (Some gang members have a dead-eyed remorselessness during the question and answer sessions, while with others it seems to be an excess of emotionalism that turns them on to violence – a point also pursued by *Boyz N the Hood*.) In addition, Gorin introduces a bizarre fictional device – the voice and VDU of a quizzical, HAL-style computer, which feeds us various pieces of madcap information and Derridaist cogitations. ("No shortage of data. But somehow it's a Mystery. Noun – 'Something that is not fully understood or that baffles or eludes the understanding'. These gangsters, Jerry, do they hold as much mystery for you as they do for me?")

With its shameless interventions, arch deconstructionism and nihilistic spirit, *My Crazy Life* is one of the most remarkable non-fiction films the BBC has ever helped to bankroll. Whether it will fare any better than *From Wimps to Warriors* at the merciless Programme Review Board may help determine the future ambitions of *Fine Cut*. In turn, the future ambitions of *Fine Cut* may help determine the fate in the 90s of innovative British television documentaries as a whole. Let's hope, like the victims of Gorin's Samoans, we can expect the unexpected.

'Hobo' will be screened on BBC2 on 28 March; 'My Crazy Life' on 4 April.

Tony Rayns reflects on the enigma of Kieślowski and 'The Double Life of Veronique'

# Kieślowski Crossing over

● Is there another film-maker who resists being pinned down as comprehensively as Krzysztof Kieślowski does? A spot check of friends and acquaintances reveals widespread admiration and enthusiasm for his work of the 80s; in fact, many agree that he's the most important film-maker in Europe these days, as important as Godard and Fassbinder were in their time. But why? Kieślowski was obviously ahead of the game when he started treating the state, totalitarian or otherwise, as an irrelevance to the lives of most people. He didn't need to comment on the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe because he'd assumed it long before the event, and he is clearly now hitting the right spots and asking the right questions for audiences. But he has no distinctive visual style, he doesn't feel any need to be combative or to denounce other kinds of cinema, and he isn't a compulsive innovator. In short, he's an unlikely successor to figures like Godard and Fassbinder.

The only time I had an extended conversation with Kieślowski was when we met by chance in a Tokyo bar a couple of years ago. The bar was La Jetée, in Shinjuku's Kabuki-cho, named after Chris Marker's great sci-fi short and probably the most famous haven for directors anywhere in the world. Marker himself is a frequent customer (as shown in the Wim Wenders documentary, *Tokyo-Ga*, 1985) and has decorated dozens of empty whiskey bottles with his beloved owls and pussycats. Other directors from Nicolas Roeg to Chen Kaige have followed suit. The bar has become a place of pilgrimage for all directors worthy of the name; Kieślowski had been taken there by his Japanese distributor.

I wish I could say that we had an earnest conversation about the cinema of moral anxiety, or the state of Polish politics. What we actually talked about, as I recall, was the unpleasant chemical taste of Japanese whiskey, the smallness of the premises (not unusual by Japanese standards, but amazing to first-time callers) and the pressures on directors now that international PR tours have become part of the process of making films. Kieślowski in person is comfortable with the streak of sardonic humour that to date runs through his movies mainly as a faintly guilty undercurrent, coming to the surface only in *Dekalog*, *Ten* (1988) – the episode of the series that begins with a punk exhortation to break the Ten Commandments and goes on to show

two mismatched brothers who inherit a priceless stamp collection. Kieślowski rejects most of the roles that critics have taken to assigning him: moralist, philosopher, social critic, anguished pessimist. But the streak of self-deprecation that emerges from almost all his published interviews seems genuine enough to make Aki Kaurismäki's regular gestures in the same direction look like doltish PR stunts.

*The Double Life of Véronique* (1991), as the UK distributor has retitled Kieślowski's new film – presumably in the belief that a French 'Véronique' is worth two Polish 'Weronikas' in the British market – opens up a new perspective on the director's career. It is his first co-production (aside from the co-operation with Sender Freies Berlin that made it possible to shoot *Dekalog* on 35mm) and his first fiction set largely outside Poland. It starts from a 'fantastic' premise: that if many people in the world are fundamentally very similar, why shouldn't there be two who are, in fact, identical?

Kieślowski and his now regular co-writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz imagine two girls, one Polish, one French, born on the same day in 1966 with the same glorious singing voice and the same potentially fatal heart condition. The first gives up her boyfriend to devote herself to singing and dies; the other gives up singing, allows herself to be seduced into a problematic love affair and lives. Whatever metaphysical, moral or auteurist complications anyone may discover in this schema, one thing is clear: the film is the most sophisticated approach to co-production yet. It takes the constraints that have scuttled countless earlier movies (the need to balance different national interests, languages and cultures) and makes them the foundation of the fiction itself.

Kieślowski has admitted (in *Positif* no. 364, amongst other places) that the project was just as much an aleatory one for him as it is for its audience. The film, he says, went through twenty alternative cuts before it reached its present form, and he shot seven possible endings, none of which (including the present one) struck him as being fully adequate. This bears out what he wrote in his introduction to the English edition of the *Dekalog* scripts: "We know no more than you. But maybe it is worth investi-

gating the unknown, if only because the very feeling of not knowing is a painful one". Perhaps this is the key to understanding the importance Kieślowski has assumed in European cinema. Unlike most of his contemporaries – the ageing radicals, the angry social critics, the directors of freshened-up melodramas, the formalists, the unreconstructed hippie dreamers – he approaches his subjects in a spirit of sincere enquiry, allowing content to shape form and the concrete circumstances surrounding the production to define the parameters of the work.

If *The Double Life of Véronique* has to be seen as Kieślowski's speculative response to the concrete challenge of international co-production, then his earlier films have equally been responses to prevailing conditions in Poland. He started out making documentaries, believing that frank observation of everyday realities would amount to an antidote to the state's Stalinist propaganda. He shifted from documentary to fiction after an incident in 1981, during the shooting of the documentary *Dworzek* (Station): the police impounded some of his rushes, believing that he might accidentally have shot evidence of criminal activity, and he realised that his cinema could be used as an extension of the authorities' surveillance cameras. His shift away from political engagement towards films dealing with life's random factors and the characters' inner lives cannot be tied to a single incident, however, but obviously relates to a progressive disillusionment with the Solidarity movement as it mutated under General Jaruzelski's martial law.

In 1981, Kieślowski (then a card-carrying Solidarity member, like all other credible figures in Polish cinema) told *Sight and Sound* that his faith in a political solution to Poland's problems was strong. By the end of the decade, though, he was telling one interviewer after another about his estrangement from the political process and his frustration at having freedom of expression without access to the means of expression. If there was a turning point, it was the passing of the Cinema Act in 1987, which withdrew government subsidies from the film industry and told the studios to start paying their own way.

The *Dekalog* series was Kieślowski's brilliant way out of the financial impasse. He secured basic funding from Polish television, topped it up with money from the Tor Studio in exchange for feature-length versions of two of the epi-

sodes, and brought in the German participation necessary to give him access to 35mm film stock. Since it was vital to his creative well-being that the series be sold internationally, he found distinct ways to 'universalise' stories drawn from Polish realities: he pushed most evidence of the everyday struggle for survival to the corners of the screen and highlighted emotional and ethical problems of the kind that would arise in any post-industrial society. He also came to terms with some of the main tenets of television soap opera by engineering tiny cross-overs from episode to episode, and by using the mysterious 'angel' who confronts the protagonists at a crucial point in each story (played by Artur Barciś, the Solidarity activist on trial in *No End*, 1984) as a linking presence.

A venture into co-production was the inevitable next step. *The Double Life of Véronique* is, in its mildly wayward fashion, as cunningly conceived as *Dekalog*. Kieślowski and Sławomir Idziak (also the cinematographer of *A Short Film about Killing*, 1988) do everything possible to stress the similarities between their two main locations, Kraków and Clermont-Ferrand, and find echoes of Poland in France even when the action moves to Paris.

Given that *Double Life* marks a new departure for Kieślowski, the most surprising thing about it is the extent to which it looks back to the Polish films. There are many deliberate references to earlier Kieślowski images and themes: for example, the glass marble through which both Weronika and Véronique sometimes look at the world refers back to *A Short Film about Love* (1988) with its anthology of optical gadgets; the twin motifs of singing lessons and sickness refer back to the sub-plot of *Dekalog*, *Nine*. Most striking of all, Kieślowski's handling of Weronika's death during her concert debut (with a strange, out-of-

body subjective shot flying over the heads of the audience, as if from the point of view of the girl's departing soul) exactly corresponds with Antoni Zyro's description of his death in the opening monologue of *No End*.

As this last example suggests, *Double Life* consolidates the strand of what Simon Field has called "agnostic mysticism" that has been haunting Kieślowski's movies for the last decade. There's no evidence in the films that Kieślowski feels any need for a rapprochement with the Polish Catholic church, but his growing insistence on the spiritual lives and fantasies of his characters (not to mention his acceptance of Piesiewicz's suggestion that they should tackle the Ten Commandments) signals his desire to explore areas that must mean a lot to his predominantly Catholic audience at home.

*Dekalog, One* is the only film in which Kieślowski confronts the notion of a cruel and jealous God. The distraught father Krzysztof's response to the death of his son Paweł while skating is to overturn a church altar; he then finds ice (what else?) in the church font. Kieślowski, though, leaves open the question of how and why the ice on the pond cracked, causing the boy to drown. A comparison with the original script is instructive; the pre-production draft published in Faber & Faber's *Dekalog* book does give a rational explanation for the cracking of the ice: the power-generating company released hot water into the pond at night, dangerously weakening the ice. The suppression of this detail in the film as shot not only eliminates an unwanted element of social criticism, but also reifies Kieślowski's 'mystical' sense of fate at work.

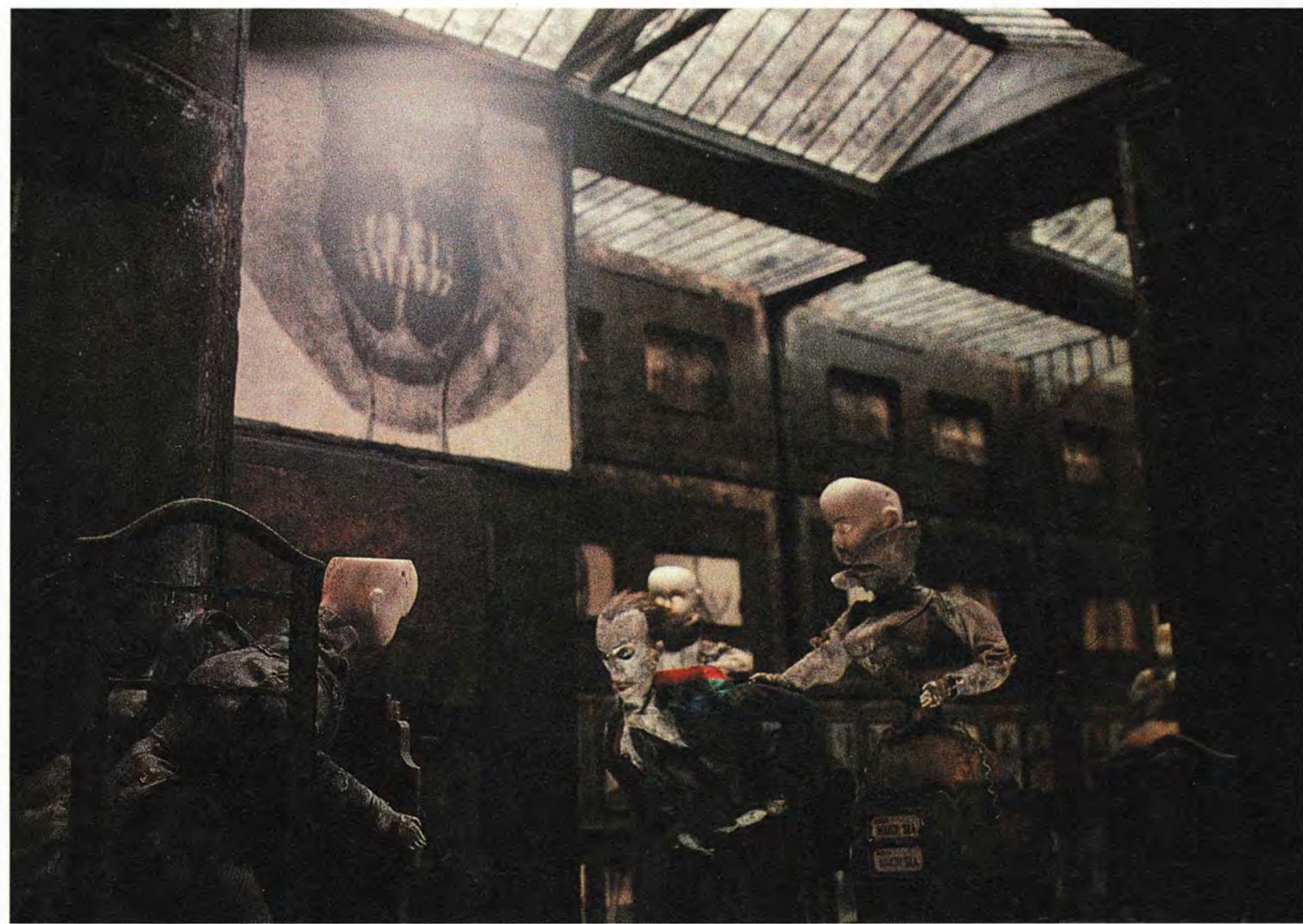
The punchline of Kieślowski's *Blind Chance* (shot in 1982, released in 1987) is that the pro-

tagonist Witek's life works out much the same way whether he becomes a Party functionary, joins the underground opposition or remains an apolitical medical student. Which of the three courses he takes, however, depends on whether or not he catches a train. The sense of an over-determining fate is set against elements of chance: the chance that a man is a split second too late or a touch too unfit to catch up with a moving train; the chance that a Pole and an Englishman might meet in a bar in Shinjuku. For Kieślowski, the conjunction of fate and random factors provides the context in which people make their decisions and take their stands. He sees this not as an inherently moral question, but as a stand-off between freedom and necessity.

Kieślowski needed to make a co-production, was free to invent a story that rhymes the cultures of Poland and France, and chose to make *The Double Life of Véronique*. Directors like Godard and Fassbinder back in the 60s and 70s never faced any such conundrum. Godard ventured overseas only during his extended flirtation with 'Maoism', imposing the same dogmas on everything he shot; hence his punch-ups (mostly verbal or financial, sometimes physical) with the producers of *One Plus One*, *British Sounds* and *One American Movie*. Fassbinder responded to the pressures (in large part self-imposed) to make films in English by shooting German-flavoured movies (*Despair*, *Lili Marleen*, *Querelle*) that ended up airily disengaged from any national culture. Kieślowski, by contrast, starts from a rational and pragmatic assessment of his situation as a film-maker and spins off into uncharted areas of speculation and mystery. The proposition that he's asking all the right questions seems borne out by the numbers of people who currently choose to watch his films. *'The Double Life of Véronique'* opens on 28 February. See Reviews, page 43.



Irène Jacob as the identical French Véronique and Polish Weronika in Kieślowski's new film, a sophisticated yet pragmatic approach to co-production



# The same dark drift

Littered with flotsam and detritus, the animation of the Brothers Quay eschews soft anthropomorphism, argues Jonathan Romney

It can be an uncanny experience at the best of times, interviewing the Brothers Quay as they sit at opposite sides of a table, superficially identical in every respect except for the cut of their overalls. It's all the more uncanny when the interview is watched over by a battered doll on a platform, one incongruously flirtatious eye glaring down from under a veiled hat. A baby body with an adult dummy head grafted on, she holds in one hand a mirror or a painted bat, and with the other lifts her skirt to reveal a ragged bush of straw pubic hair, at which an equally ragged rabbit, hugging her ankles, gazes with lovelorn curiosity.

These are the leads in the Quays' latest animation film, a three-minute rock promo for 'Are We Still Married' by the group His Name Is Alive. The Quays call the film *Stille Nacht 2*; they

see it as a sequel to a 1988 short they made for MTV's *Art Break* slot, which featured a doll, a set of spoons and a forest of magnetised iron filings. What's the connection? "Just the same dark drift", they explain, "basically inscrutable. It's gently mysterious".

Lately there seems to have been little room for inscrutability in animation. Last year, animation hit the public imagination in a big way with Nick Park's Oscar-winning *Creature Comforts* (1989) and the subsequent success of the Aardman Studios video. The coming wave of computer-generated imagery is just beginning to break, with American prodigy John Lasseter scoring a major success in *Knick-Knack* (1989), and animators like France's Pascal Vuong (*Blind Love*, 1991) exploring similar avenues of electronic alchemy. In their different ways, the

Claymation and computer schools are technically and imaginatively admirable, but they tend to do pretty much what animation has always done - amaze, amuse and bring life to inanimate matter. Above all - and this is surely the key to their success - they anthropomorphise ruthlessly.

The more mainstream attention such work gets, the more it reminds us of the crucially marginal importance of the Brothers Quay, animators whose work is marked by a meticulous eschewal of soft anthropomorphism and of the narrative gag. The Quays have described animation as a ghetto; with their methods and aesthetic, they have wilfully created their own ghetto within a ghetto. Yet the more marginal the Quays appear, the more their work can be seen to be absolutely central to the question of



animation. With its increasingly fine, even neurotic scrutiny, the Quays' work is nothing less than an inquiry into the founding paradoxes of the form.

To bring their puppets to 'life', the Brothers work painstakingly through frame after frame of static postures, building them up into the semblance of motion. This is the paradox that underlies all film, one that live action hides and that animation, at its truest, unearths. All animation, of course, is based on this paradox, but the Quays address it directly. Paul Hammond has called their pixillation technique

"nudged *nature morte*" – and the play on *nature morte* and its equivalent *still life* is never far from these films' surface.

The Quays do not so much animate *dead matter* as dramatise the *deadness of matter*. The figures in their films – broken dolls, the flotsam of nurseries and curiosity shops, botched-up chimeras of dead bone and wing and tissue and vegetable – are things that have died and been recomposed, re-animated, like miniature mummies. They are ghosts, living uncannily beyond their 'natural' lives, and inhabiting the equally ghostly landscapes that the Quays build in little boxes – the cities, theatres, labyrinths, forests of Eastern European literary myth. Quay puppets are not alive but *undead*; they don't have lives but after-lives.

What makes these little *danses macabres* so

haunting is the way they dramatise the viewer's role. In Quay films, the eye – or its surrogate, the camera – is the central character. The puppets themselves incarnate this obsessive opticality. A major discovery for the Brothers – in *Street of Crocodiles* (1986) – was the glass doll's-eye, which by its presence or absence implicates the viewer in the films' scopic dramas. The petrified glare of that film's desiccated doll-hero is parodically returned by the tailor dolls he encounters, whose china heads have empty sockets illuminated from within. The myth of the eye as window to the soul could hardly be more remorselessly defused.

"For us", the Brothers have said, "the camera is the third puppet in a sense, the motivator". Since their 1985 film *This Unnameable Little Broom*, the vagaries of the lens have played ►

**Dead matters: the Quay Brothers' obsession with dramatising the deadness of matter – broken dolls, the flotsam of curiosity shops, dead bone and tissue – is visible in 'Street of Crocodiles', above left, and 'The Comb', above**

► an increasingly important role in their work. The camera tracks in, tilts, then tracks back; the image fades out, fades in again; but the film never delivers the revelatory vision it seems to promise. In the micro-narratives of perception that fill the Quays' work, there is never any pay-off.

These stories of the eye have recently been refined to an extreme. *Rehearsals for Extinct Anatomies* is built entirely around avatars of the line – the lines that compose a Fragonard engraving; a computer bar code that drifts in and out of focus; the strings that cross the screen, twanging imperceptibly; even the strings on the soundtrack; above all, the line of sight. In *The Comb* (1990), a dream narrative in shades of forest red, the narrative is almost entirely composed of shifting focus and field of vision – we are never sure what we are seeing, forever denied a stable vision. Ironically, the Brothers' most clear-cut film, *De Artificiali Perspectiva or Anamorphosis* (1990), explores the elusiveness of sight.

Born in 1947 in Philadelphia, Stephen and Timothy Quay came to Britain in the late 60s, studying illustration at the Royal College of Art. There they met their producer, Keith Griffiths, who set up their first BFI-funded project, *Nocturna Artificialia*, in 1979 and founded with them the production company Koninck Studios (the name was taken from a Belgian beermat). Atelier Koninck is the Quays' South London studio. It occupies a modern industrial unit, but with its prodigal clutter of books, bric-à-brac and arcane detritus resembles an alchemical stockroom of the 1830s.

Currently, the centrepiece is a scaled-down set for a National Theatre production of Molière's *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, a luminous white construction limned with colour-photocopied ink swirls and chandeliers formed from the baroque calligraphy that is a Quays' leitmotif. This is their latest work with director Richard Jones, for whom they designed sets for Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa*, Feydeau's *A Flea in her Ear* at the Old Vic, and Prokofiev's *A Love for Three Oranges* at the ENO. This last is their most celebrated work in the public domain, though they have also worked extensively in advertisements – their “pact with the devil”, as they call it – including ones for Honeywell Computers, Walkers Crisps, and an essay in grain and veneer for ICI Woodcare. Recently, they made three idents for BBC2, which together tell a story of a paper man, his pen and a flotilla of small feathers.

The Quays have also made two sorties into pop video. The first was as part of a team with various Aardman animators, working on Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer* (1986) clip. This was not a happy experience, since they were talked into shuffling fruit and veg in the style of the Baroque *trompe l'oeil* master Arcimboldo – a cheap shot, they felt, and not their style.

*Stille Nacht 2* is far more in their line, and 4AD Records, who commissioned it, famously share the Quay penchant for baroque imagery (the affinities become apparent if you look at any Pixies LP sleeve). The film largely disregards



**Unstable worlds: one of the Quay Brothers' idents for BBC2**

the song's stately lugubriousness, working at frenzied speed as a ping-pong ball shoots dementedly around the set and the rabbit's ears flutter in what is probably the only concession to cuteness in the Brothers' entire output. Shot in thirty days on a £12,000 budget, it's a perfect example of the Brothers' hands-on – some would say deliberately archaic – approach. They avoid taking measurements and the luxury of Go-Motion computer control, having learnt with time to do it all by eye.

“There are people out there doing it so perfectly that you say, fuck, I'd like it to be really primitive. For us it's important that physically we do it all, that we don't have assistants. We have a tracking shot on the doll's feet that would be almost impossible in live action – to put that camera on the ground and have a focus puller on his hands and knees.”

The Quays now have two scripts in development, both breaking new ground for them. The first, provisionally entitled *Sleepwalkers of Daylight*, is a music project for BBC2 about the German master of the literary fantastic, E.T.A. Hoffmann, and the composers Anton Bruckner and Hugo Wolf. The Brothers have already made two short music films, on Stravinsky and Janacek – imaginative flights that in no way resemble documentaries. The seventy-minute *Sleepwalkers* will mix live action, animation and marionettes, and demand an estimated budget of £600,000. One more investor is needed, but Austrian television has agreed to foot the bill for the recording of the orchestral music. *Sleepwalkers*, the script explains, “aims to depict an imagined world in which both the banal and the commonplace are infused with the exotic and the incomprehensible” – a fair description of Hoffmann's warped, proto-Freudian world.

“It's basically about the notion of Romanticism”, the Brothers explain. “Hoffmann was one of the great night figures. We went for the

musician in him – he did write music, but having failed at it, he subverted it into his writing. Hence a lot of the writing is based around musical themes and images. That's the side that interested us. We have him fantasising about two musicians into the future, Anton Bruckner the symphonist and Hugo Wolf the miniaturist. It's as though Hoffmann could have imagined two extremes in the Romantic trajectory”.

The other project is a total departure – the Quays' first live-action feature, provisionally entitled *Institute Benjamenta, or This Dream Which People Call Human Life*. It's based on *Jakob von Gunten*, a novel by Robert Walser (1878-1956), a Swiss writer who influenced Kafka and who spent the last twenty years of his life in mental institutions. Walser ranks high in the Quays' idiosyncratic literary canon; they had a dry run with him in *The Comb*, which drew on his rewritings of fairy tales. The tales again find their way into *Institute Benjamenta*, set in a school for servants, where pupils learn to abnegate their personalities in the name of good service. Little of this is evident in the script – by the Brothers in collaboration with Alain Passes – which evokes something like the nightmare mood of the animation, with camera movements and shifts of light minutely detailed. It contains little dialogue: the film is dominated by images, and what the Brothers will look for in their cast is a sense of the physical. “Meyerhold talked about the power of the puppet and the mask, the immovability. That's one thing we want to maintain with the actors. It's not that you're treating people like puppets, it's just that the actor should conceive of his face as the internalisation of a mask”.

As it stands, the script is also fluid, open to influence by matters outside the text. One such factor is the music, by the Brothers' longtime Polish collaborator Leszek Jankowski. “We have

almost an hour's worth of music that Leszek wrote, that will in a sense have provoked a great deal of it. With *Rehearsals* and *The Comb*, Leszek wrote the music first and we very much let it write the scenario. The rhythms he set up we allowed to establish the trajectory of the script – which comes a lot closer to what a dancer would do choreographing Stravinsky. You never ask a ballet to be that clear – you can afford narrative ellipses, sudden changes which cinema doesn't tolerate".

The other factor that will shape the film is the space it is shot in, which – partly for reasons of economy – the Brothers insist should be a found space, an old school or a gym. "A certain approach to a corridor, or a certain set of steps, would tell you to rewrite the script a certain way. The space provokes the response. We tend to build on accidents". In this sense, the Brothers are firm believers in serendipity, and although they rail against the appellation 'Surrealist', one thing they do share with the classic school of Breton and Aragon is this faith in the possibility of encountering the perfect space at the perfect moment. "To catch a glimpse of a church through a mirror, to sense there's a forbidden room there", they enthuse, remembering a visit to Kafka's room in Prague, one window of which offers an unimpeded peephole view into a nearby church.

Such haunted spaces appeal to the Brothers, especially those that are redolent of a dilapidated Europe swimming in the cultural debris

of its own history. Institute Benjamenta is informed by a fascination for the covered galleries and arcades of the nineteenth century, spaces that also shaped the world of *Crocodiles*. That film is set within a mechanical peepshow or "wooden oesophagus", in which its hero wanders a mirror gallery that alludes to the haunted shopping galleries of Bruno Schulz's fiction. Shot by the Nazis in 1942, Schulz lived and died in Drohobycz in Galicia, an area that's disappeared into a fold on the map of Europe.

A sense of vanished time and space has always haunted the Quays. Schulz is their totem writer, his fiction crammed with passages that read like descriptions of their own aesthetic and their "passion for coloured tissue, for *papier mâché*, for distemper, for oakum and sawdust". "That part of Galicia", they have said, "the borderlines have changed so often, you feel at home being lost in it, rather than within perfectly ordered boundaries... That apocryphal thirteenth month, those tracks that lead off into time suspended, it's ideal for animation".

Hence, their canon of arcane or *maudit* writers – Schulz, Walser, Céline, the Flemish playwright Michel de Ghelderode. Their affinities also lie in Eastern Europe, their masters names like Starewycz and Trnka; Yuri Norstein, the Russian maker of *Tale of Tales*; Walerian Borowczyk, who before his career as an art-porn auteur successfully moved from animation to live action with *Goto, Island of Love* (1968),

**Jayne Pilling reports from the animation conference that had something for everyone**

## Coming to life

The last decade has seen a dramatic rise in profile for animation films here and in the US. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* reminded us that not only Spielberg but George Lucas and Joe Dante have long been inspired by classic Hollywood cartoons.

Yet animation has hardly been at the top of the film and media studies agenda, though the third annual conference of the Society for Animation Studies, held this year at the Rochester Institute of Technology, is one indication that the situation is changing. Internationally acclaimed animators such as Caroline Leaf and Suzan Pitt discovered animation as fine art students at Harvard, and a small but significant number of American animators are also academics – the Rochester Institute of Technology itself has a research centre for computer science and animation, with experimental animators Stephanie Maxwell and Skip Battaglia on faculty. The mix of people and approaches at the conference reflected this and indicated the

various ways different disciplines use animation.

Papers such as 'The Ultimate Force Multiplier: Army Aviation Training Flight Simulation Missions and the Decline of the Referential in Mass Media' vied with anthropological analysis of Bugs Bunny via Claude Lévi-Strauss. And though Woody Woodpecker's subjection to Barry Salt-inspired dissection techniques failed to convince the audience of this cartoon character's subversive potential compared to Daffy Duck, Mary McLaughlin's phenomenological reading of Pat O'Neill's experimental animation film *Light and Water* was quite inspiring.

Panel sessions were organised thematically around categories such as History, Gender and Ethnic Representation, Computer Animation, Aesthetics, Media Studies and TV (the inevitable *Simpsons*). Some panels worked particularly well; for instance Richard deCordova's look at movie merchandising, consumerism and Disney led interestingly into Eric Smoodin's analysis of the construction of film bills (complete cinema programmes).

High-wire post-modernist theory from the aptly named Power Institute in Sydney received short shrift from the traditional historians – though Russell George's theorising of classic Hollywood cartoons, which

drew on the work of Thomas Elsaesser and Noël Burch on live-action films, met with more indulgence and connected usefully with a modest but instructive look at punning in Warner Bros cartoons. Some interesting cross-fertilisation occurred, as in the tentative links between the anthropological paper on Bugs Bunny and another dealing with Laban dance techniques applied to computer animation.

The Society for Animation Studies, founded four years ago in Los Angeles, is an international organisation which aims to promote and disseminate academic work on animation. Though predominantly American in membership, the international remit is generally taken seriously. At the conference, an informative paper by Brian Fuller dealt with Japanese manga-derived cartoon features, but overall the paucity of non-American subjects was disappointing. Restricted finances for travel and translation are partly to blame; last year's conference was held at the Ottawa Animation Festival and had much stronger international input. There are hopes that 1993 will see a UK venue and increased participation from Europe.

Evening screenings showcased restored and rare films from Eastman House Archive, along with recent East Coast independents.

one of the Quays' favourites; and, of course, Jan Svankmajer.

These days, however, the Brothers tend to play down the Svankmajer connection, which has become something of a millstone. Some critics still regard the Brothers as dogged acolytes of the Czech, although they're clearly in a different mould. The connection came about when the Quays and Keith Griffiths discovered Svankmajer's work in Prague and decided to make a homage to him in *The Cabinet of Jan Svankmajer* (1984). However, they feel their bent is closer to Norstein, and point out that Svankmajer is very much a militant Surrealist (practically a card-carrying one, in fact, as a member of the Prague Surrealist group).

With their planned move into live action, the Quays' individuality should be all the more apparent. Of course they worry about giving up the security of their hermetic Atelier to work outside with other people, though their stage designs have already prepared them to some extent for that.

The one thing certain not to change is the uncanny nature of their space and the unsettling narrative style it carries. "Narrative for us", they say, "is always tangential, it just filters in from the side and creates this climate. In the end you feel this conspiratorial climate that makes you think, 'I'm at the centre of something and I don't know what it is'. You come out the other end still looking in the rear view mirror and thinking, 'I haven't arrived yet'".

Unfortunately, none of these programmes was specifically related to conference topics, except by accident – as with the astonishing and explicitly gay caricatures in Gregory La Cava's 1919 *Breath of a Nation*, a comic cartoon satirising the temperance movement. An unscheduled screening of the films discussed in Sharon Couzin's paper 'Women's Voice in Contemporary American Animation' occurred only as the result of heroic efforts on the part of author and delegates to negotiate the Institute's labyrinthine matrix of buildings.

A recurrent discussion topic was the need to find publication outlets for the papers. The plurality of disciplines, stimulating though it is, exacerbates the problem. Papers on the Disney studio strike or witch-hunting in the cartoon industry could end up in cinema history journals, while Smoodin and deCordova's contributions are destined for publication in cultural studies books. There are signs of progress: *Screen* may include a selection of papers in a forthcoming animation issue, while SAS member Mary Furniss has just announced the creation of a new quarterly, *The Animation Journal*. Given this burgeoning academic interest, and the growth in general audiences for animation over the past few years, the work of SAS could not be more timely.

The future of the studio where Lang's 'Metropolis' and post-war East German films were made hangs in the balance. Jennine Lanouette reports on its prospects

# Whose studio is it anyway?

Just outside western Berlin, in the town of Babelsberg, is a studio complex with seventeen sound stages and twenty-five acres of backlots that has had an impact on film history dating back to 1919, when *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* startled the world. In 1926, the studio's largest stage was built to accommodate the sets for Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*; in 1930 it saw Marlene Dietrich portraying the seductive vamp Lola Lola in *The Blue Angel*. Ernst Lubitsch, Alfred Hitchcock, Greta Garbo and Billy Wilder all began their careers in this studio, which was known at the time as UFA and was the dominant film producer in Germany.

After the defection to Hollywood of many of its greatest talents during the early 30s, UFA became a factory for Nazi propaganda films, including Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1936). At the end of the war, the studio found itself in the Soviet-controlled eastern zone. The site was renovated to become the home of DEFA, the East German state-run production company, and directors, writers, actors and technicians were required to work within the ideological limits of socialist realism in return for a monthly pay packet. Meanwhile, East Germany's lack of hard currency for upgrading technology kept the technical facilities frozen in time at about 1945.

With the recent move towards privatising all former East German state companies, the future of the Babelsberg studio complex, rich in both history and resources, has become the subject of lengthy debate. For the average West German, it is the illustrious pre-war history that has the most meaning, and the rallying cry 'Save the DEFA Studio!' has become a call for landmark preservation. On New Year's Eve 1990 a popular television talk show host did his part by interviewing Marlene Dietrich by telephone in Paris as she reminisced about UFA's 'golden years'. A few weeks later a similar programme featured Billy Wilder speaking from Hollywood. Unsurprisingly, former East Germans became irritated by this slanted perspective. In the words of a recently laid-off DEFA worker: "All they talk about is Fritz Lang, Fritz Lang, Fritz Lang. But there is also the history of the studio in the past forty years which should not be forgotten".

When DEFA took over the Babelsberg site in 1946, the lights and cameras of the studios

were immediately put to work on anti-fascist films aimed at purging the German consciousness of National Socialist dogma. Today, East and West Germans alike express great respect for the work of this period, in particular Wolfgang Staudte's *The Murderers Are Amongst Us* (1946) and Kurt Maetzig's *Marriage in the Shadows* (1947). Attempts to chart the artistic development of the studio's forty years in the German Democratic Republic reveal an oscillating pattern between tight party control and degrees of openness. One of the most notable points is 1966, when after a period of relative openness an entire year's production of about fifteen films were 'forbidden' because of their perceived radical viewpoint, ruining several careers. Even today, DEFA directors find it painful to speak about this period.

For former DEFA directors, the preservation of the studio is seen as the means of being able to tell the story of what went on in the GDR's forty-year history. They fear that the price of the removal of the party influence will be to become a service facility for western product. In response to questions about the degree of censorship to which they were subjected, many former East Germans seem to support commonly held western preconceptions by expressing a simultaneous admission and denial of censorship's existence, as if drawing the words from a standard party line. Even those who do not adhere to this line often fail to articulate the nature of their earlier life, as if not enough time has passed for them to achieve the necessary distance.

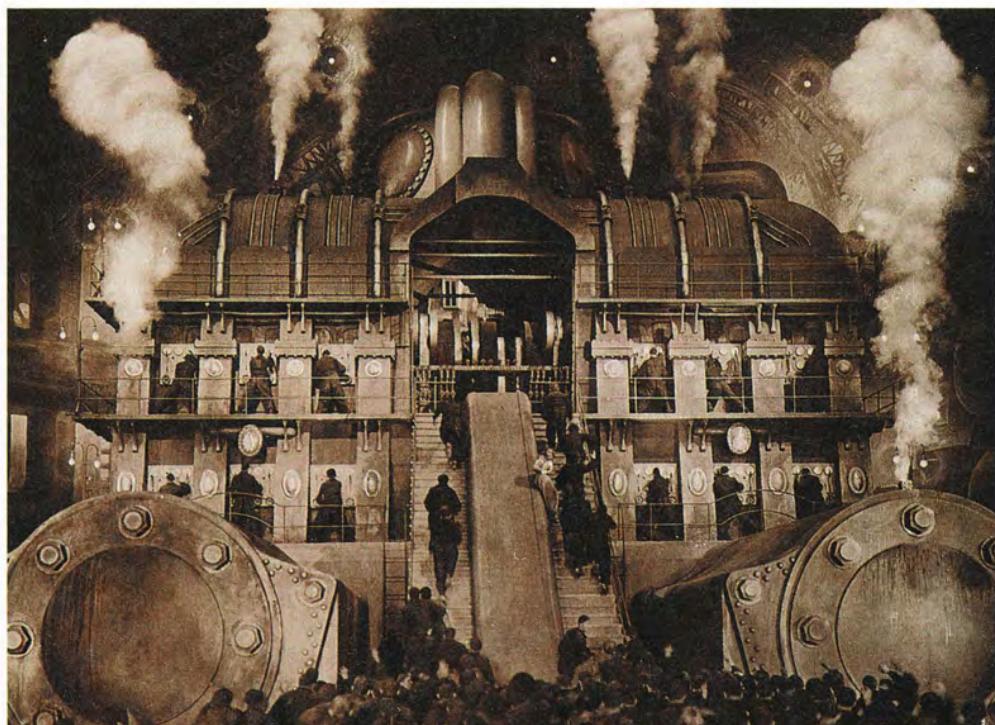
An exception is Roland Gräf, whose film *The Tango Player* (1991), shown at last year's Berlin Film Festival, has received much international attention. According to Gräf, "There were some people who did adapt and then there were others, who I think were better directors, who resisted and did what they wanted. Sometimes it would cost tremendous amounts of time. For example, a few years ago I made a film about Hans Fallada, one of the greatest German writers of this century, who didn't emigrate during the Nazi period, which meant he lived with the same conflict between conforming and resisting that we lived with in the GDR. It took me three years to get through all the ideological hoops, but in the end, through personal courage and stubbornness, I was able to insist

on what I wanted". A similar ambivalence is expressed by director Dietmar Hochmuth: "Of course in East Germany it was always a very difficult process to get the party signature for a film. But once we got this signature, we could get the money and make what we wanted. Now we are free from this stress, but we find we must think instead for the first time about the question of market".

Gräf is the head of the Artistic Committee, set up by former DEFA directors to advocate the studio's continuation as a producer of films and to respond to the west's ongoing accusations of collaboration and entrenchment. "The irritation with all these questions from the west about to what extent you were involved is very strong. For example, when we say we want to keep DEFA because we think it is valuable, the people in the west say, 'You just want to maintain your source of income. You've been coddled by this government for so many years and had this guaranteed salary. Isn't this your just desserts, the proper punishment for this activity?' The idea that all the people at the top have Stalinist backgrounds or philosophies is one of the over-simplifications we are trying to work against. Of course there were Stalinists at DEFA, but there was also a large variety of people who weren't Stalinists. There were people who were trying to effect change and to work on reforming the system".

Unfortunately, not all were as successful as Gräf in making the films they wanted. Hannes Schönemann began working at DEFA just after the 1966 crackdown. He spent several years as a scriptwriter but all his proposals to direct were rejected. By the early 80s he was beginning to be aware of a blacklisting effect and concluded that his opportunity to direct at DEFA would never come. He applied to leave the country with his wife Sybille, a documentary filmmaker who has chronicled their experience in *Locked Up Time* (1991), which has been shown at many international film festivals over the last year. The Schönemanns' high profile as filmmakers caused the state to make an example of them. They were subjected to six months of harassment in order to incriminate them and then were imprisoned for over a year before finally being expelled to the west.

It was never the Schönemanns' intention to be activists against the system. Hannes des-



'Metropolis': the studio's largest stage was built to accommodate Fritz Lang's sets



Striking sets: is the fate of a once great studio to be sold off as real estate?

cribes himself as critical of the state, but "with solidarity". However, he learned later that the individualistic nature of his student films and feature scripts had led the secret police to keep a file on him labelled 'The one who is in doubt'. Although Schönemann is careful to cite Gräf as one of his mentors, he takes a considerably harsher view than Gräf of the value of DEFA. "I don't think that it will be economically possible for DEFA to maintain itself. The old structure of employee artists is against the spirit of art; they *bought* the artists. Anyone who made a career at DEFA during the last thirty years had to sell himself out unconsciously. There were people who remained sincere, but they were the exception. Now there are people who say, 'We want to keep our workplace so we can tell the stories which in former times we were not allowed to'. But someone else has to do this – the young people who did not sell out".

At the end of June 1990, with the West German government's careering drive towards reunification, the DEFA studio was privatised, necessitating the immediate lay-off of almost half of its 2,300 workers. Scrambling to adapt, the studio administrators went to look for help in the west. But according to Andréas Scheinert, DEFA's director of marketing, the German banks they approached offered neither investment nor advice, with the attitude that East German concerns were not a worthy business risk. Instead, a consultant from the Frankfurt branch of Chase Manhattan was brought in to help develop a business plan whereby the studio's facilities for providing services to international film and television productions would be exploited to create a financial foundation which would allow DEFA to continue to produce films. DEFA was to serve as an umbrella organisation for several commercial entities – a production company, a sound mix studio, a special effects company, a set construction company, prop and costume companies, a catering service, a studio tour, and so on.

Although the proposal was a good one – and laid the groundwork for the plan currently being pursued – this attempt at self-privatisation is bound to fail without the tremendous amount of investment capital that will be necessary to modernise the facilities. Between 150 and 200 million DM are required to upgrade basic services alone: the telephone system, ►

◀ notoriously bad throughout former East Germany; the heating system, which dates back to the 20s; air conditioning; wiring; the installation of photocopiers and computers. The Treuhandanstalt, the federal agency assigned the task of privatising all former East German state-run companies, has now been brought in to look for investors.

The Treuhand executives charged with deciding the future of DEFA are four former West Germans and one former East German with no previous knowledge of the film industry. The greatest fears in the western film community are that substantial portions of the lot will be sold off for real estate development and that the remaining studio will become dominated by television. Under pressure from a disparate group of lobbyists including the European Directors' Union, French culture minister Jack Lang and the governments of Berlin and the Brandenburg region, the Treuhand has now come round to the idea that DEFA should be preserved as a place of European media pro-

duction. But no formula has yet been devised to determine how much of the studio should be devoted to television and how much to film.

The Berlin Film Commission strongly advocates resisting television domination at DEFA because of the unusual opportunity for film production the studio provides. "Our interest is to make DEFA a site with some television, but not just television", says Hartwig Wilbrandt, deputy film commissioner, "because to make television production you don't need all these big studios. If the DEFA studio were used for film production, it could put Berlin back into the international business of film-making. The best thing for Berlin would be a sort of brain drain from Hollywood, a reverse of what happened when all the talent left here to go there. But this is only a dream".

The more likely reality is that DEFA will become a profit-making corporation consisting of a combination of private and government ownership. The Treuhand hopes to attract a large international media company - the hot

favoured at the time of writing is a joint venture between the CGE/Schaeffers Franco-German consortium and media giant Bertelsmann - to function as a leading partner in the corporation and provide investment funds. To demonstrate its interest in having international participation, the Treuhand has retained a non-German bank, Credit Swiss/First Boston, to evaluate the investment proposals. Meanwhile, the Berlin and Brandenburg governments are working out a co-operative agreement for joint control of the 25 to 30 per cent government share that will assure the studio's future as a film and television production centre. Decisions are expected in early to mid-1992.

The disproportionate number of former West Germans holding decision-making positions at the Treuhand means that former East Germans tend to be distrustful of this body. This is not an entirely unjustified perception: the remaining 800 craftsmen and technicians could easily find themselves out of work when the new owners arrive.

**What kind of censorship do current east German documentaries suffer, asks Carl-Erdmann Schönfeld?**

## Scissors in the head

I walk down the road towards the city branch of DEFA documentary studios, and pass the 'Hall of Tears' where westerners used to board their trains home after visiting their brothers and sisters. It now stands silent. Inside the studio office, managing director Thomas Schmidt still bears witness to the sparse style of the former bureaucracy. But his openness is a reminder that times have changed.

Schmidt radiates the kind of optimism that makes you wonder whether it is based on experience or is pure calculation. No doubt it is an essential quality in steering a company associated with the *ancien régime* through the uncharted waters of the market economy, and in justifying his moves to the Treuhand, while laws on finance, broadcasting and copyright are still unclear.

Schmidt worked as an assistant film director before the changes and now finds himself part of a new generation of east German businessmen who face the disapproval of a workforce reduced in this case from 880 to 215. Disappointed that reunification has crushed their best hope of making their voices heard, those film-makers who are on contract to the new limited production company see their management as a hidebound party of collaborators.

Film-makers such as Winfried Junge and his cinematographer Hans Eberhard Leupold (known in Britain for *Biographies*, 1981, the GDR

counterpart to Michael Apted's *Seven Up*, 1964, and their contribution to *From Marx and Engels to Marks & Spencer*, 1988) now find themselves fighting for government funding and television money, in Junge's case in collaboration with a West German company with experience of federal funding organisations and television stations. Some former DEFA producers have set up their own production companies, learning the skill of selling themselves.

In former times, the DEFA studios produced on average six documentaries per year for cinema release in the GDR. Now, those same film-makers who previously recorded rigid protocol and socialist brother kisses for the GDR government are polishing the corporate identities of former class enemies such as the Federal Press Office and Lufthansa airlines. The current affairs department is beginning to turn in a profit, though the real treasure house is in the 'bunker' - an 8,000-title archive of socialist realist and government propaganda. Much of this footage has never been shown, some because it was cut before it

could be released (like sausages when the centralised economy was short of supply). Some propaganda films for foreign embassies were also never used because the propaganda was too obvious.

The DEFA documentary studios were founded by the GDR government in 1946 to produce the weekly newsreel *Eyewitness*. Over the years, film-makers learned how to put their real messages into the images - censors, it was realised, concentrated on text rather than visuals, sometimes only checking the transcript. This contributed to the development of a unique documentary culture.

The chains of censorship were felt most keenly in preparing treatments for review before production could begin. At this point, petrol shortages and work regulations could become severe obstacles. Once a project was accepted, however, there would be few restrictions on time or money. Shot on 35mm film for as long as was judged necessary, proletarian life was lifted on to the big screen, inevitably with some rough edges due to the low sensitivity of the film

stock. But the brilliance of the images, the patience in shooting and the appreciation of detail led to the unique, very human style of DEFA documentaries such as Helke Misselwitz's *Winter Adé* (1988), Jürgen Böttcher's *fly-on-the-Berlin-Wall Die Mauer* (1991), and Sybille Schönemann's *Locked Up Time* (1991).

Today the censors have disappeared, but Schmidt claims that with those scissors now located inside the film-makers' heads, censorship has become even tighter. Finance, rather than acceptance of a production, has become the key problem. Yet the latest DEFA documentaries shown at the Leipzig Film Festival use the new freedom in various ways. Eduard Schreiber's *Eastern Landscape* (1991), shot at a rubbish dump, a former forbidden location, is a silent but poetic account of how GDR history is being disposed of, left to rot or be picked up by Russian soldiers. Thomas Heise has taken the opportunity to finish a project which was stopped 'for reasons of state security'. His film *Iron Time* (1991) follows the lives of four youngsters from the first socialist city in Germany - two of them commit suicide, one almost kills his Stasi father. Both films start to fill the 'black holes' left by both eastern and western historians by providing personal testimonies from a grassroots point of view. As Schreiber points out, "Like the British, we like the losers".

Despite the problems that reunification has brought, Schmidt's experience of trying to sell programmes to western television stations gives cause for true optimism, showing that once people from both sides start to work together, differences are aired and the problems can begin to disappear.



'Eastern Landscape', Schreiber's film of how GDR history is disposed of

# Severe perspectives

The vagaries of visual memory are the stuff of art, of image-making. I've always relied upon my memory as a miraculously imperfect tool, bound to distort the unknown, loosen the bonds of the familiar, float imprecise shadows for me to appropriate. After all, what would I, or any artist do with a perfect memory to remind us constantly that such a quality of line is Picasso's, that blurred gesture de Kooning's, that compositional device out of Piranesi? Such accuracy would so blunt the precious delusion of 'creativity' as to render one impotent.

Nevertheless my fond *folie* of an imperfect but fellow-travelling Mnemosyne received a rude jolt when I went back to look at Walerian Borowczyk's *Les Jeux des anges* (1964). I've known, that is remembered occasionally, that this little animated film had a profound effect on me in the 60s. But I'd forgotten what the film looked like. Seeing it again last week, reduced to a little squeezed pink rag in an editing screen, I was shocked to discover how closely I'd borrowed its imagery and formalistic canons: sawn-off pipes, severe perspectives, notions of repetition and distortion. These had become mine, amplified in several years of pen and ink drawings. And my memory had totally blocked the source.

For a very brief time in the mid-60s I worked for Derek Hill's Short Film Service in Wardour Street... in some capacity. Answering the phone or something. The place was a jumping nerve centre: anything that had just happened was happening there. Polish animation was the thing; hot, bleak and strange. There I saw an episode of *The Theatre of Mr and Mrs Kabal* (1967) and *Les Jeux des anges*. And they wowed me.

The blessed 60s had been a bad time for me as an artist. I'd recently come from South Africa and was suffering from culture shock, and the *horror* of other people's *vacui*, if I may be allowed the pun. It was immensely difficult to leave behind images of oppression, torture and heroism for the frivolities of miniskirts and minimalism. I'd known nothing of post-war British austerity, so couldn't celebrate flower-power and *frou-frou*. My social conscience was assaulted by cultural silliness, and modish abstraction and Pop Art seemed not so much the syntax of the 'cool' as the frozen discourse of non-commitment. What I missed most was a sense of cause; a narrative (even if the narrative of despair) and the imagery of difference or alienation.

The Vietnam war supplied me with the subject for some bloody and probably inept canvases, half sculpture half painting; but nobody wanted to exhibit them on the King's Road. *Les Jeux des anges*, however, supplied me with mechanistic metaphors which were about alienation but not alien to abstraction; abstract,

A recent screening of Walerian Borowczyk's 'Les Jeux des anges' reminds artist Deanna Petherbridge of the 60s, her debt to the film – and its mechanistic metaphors

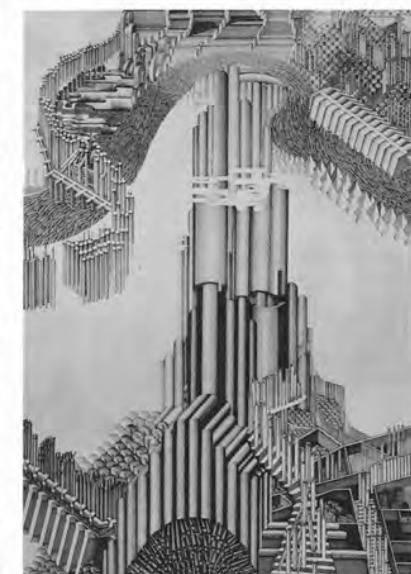
but capable of narrative development. I pounced on Borowczyk's sawn-off pipes and incorporated them into an elaborate linear language: distanced, ambivalent and threatening.

*Les Jeux des anges* is very simple technically, and gains its effects from obsessive repetition and claustrophobic rhythmic control. It is practically monochrome, and apart from the bleeding wings, the imagery is bleakly simplified and geometric. There is a narrative of sorts – the abstract narrative of repetition, interruption, junction and disjunction. Repetitive frames suggest the rhythmic patterns of a journeying train or metabolic regurgitation, as the wingless angels destroy each other or pieces of bodies-as-pipes are crammed into boxes; a seesaw sequence of guillotined heads attains the mechanistic inevitability of the destructive machines of *Metropolis* (1926). The visual elisions are clever and horrifying: the ubiquitous pipes become joined into the folds of a curtain; turned on their side, they become gun barrels and weapons of destruction.

Years later, at a performance of Tadeusz Kantor's *Wielepole*, *Wielepole* I was riveted by a similar transformation. The not-so-innocent proboscis of a box camera suddenly expands into the barrel of a machine gun and kills the memory-grey victims on the bed.

*Les Jeux des anges*, like all Borowczyk's animation and feature films, is also about voyeurism. We are watching from a train window, or outside a reversible box perspective; within the film, a female figure watches from a theatre box. The voyeuristic aspect of Borowczyk seemed to me trite at the time. It still looks trite twenty-seven years later, within the climate of obligatory and oh-so-tedious reminders that film is a mode of representation is a mode of... is a mode of... What is interesting to read, however, is that voyeurism has become the obsessive core of Borowczyk's later career devoted to pornography.

The only feature film of Borowczyk's I ever saw was *Blanche* (1971). I remember



Deanna Petherbridge, 'The Iron Siege of Pavia' (Panel 1), 1973-5

little about it, except disappointment and a remote admiration for the lush use of art-historical tableaux. Vermeer? Does Derek Jarman know it?

I also remember little about Borowczyk's and Jan Lenica's 60s animation except that they established a collage language out of Max Ernst, which would later surface in the spoof graphics of Monty Python. Derek Hill remembers that in a discussion at a film festival of the short film *Dom*, made in 1958, a commentator remarked that it was like a film from Mars. "I am a Martian", replied Walerian Borowczyk.

Postscript: A few years ago, after my mother's death, a scrapbook which I had assembled at the age of six or seven surfaced in the family. Among cut-out fairies and fashion were Second World War army forts. The very images which I believed I'd invented in *The Concrete Armada* (1978), in Manchester City Art Galleries.

So what?

So what's a feminist doing with all this internalised male imagery?



Walerian Borowczyk's 'Les Jeux des anges' (1964), with its bleeding wings

# A dream of three continents



Alison Light

**The Films of Merchant Ivory**

Robert Emmet Long, Viking, £30, 207pp

For many of today's cinemagoers the name Merchant Ivory means period films. Loose talk (not least in this magazine - see *Sight and Sound* June 1991) has identified the company's recent adaptations of E. M. Forster's *Room with a View* and *Maurice* in particular with a conservative evocation of Englishness, in which the Edwardian era figures as a more civilised lost age, filmed as elegant costume drama. And now we have their version of *Howards End*.

Yet far from being insular, Merchant Ivory are essentially cosmopolitan. Their other recent work includes a documentary on street musicians in Bombay, a feature about Thomas Jefferson's sexual liaison with a woman slave, and a film of Anita Desai's *In Custody*, the story of a poor teacher's attachment to Urdu poetry. Whatever the nature of Merchant Ivory's romance with the past, Robert Emmet Long's new book reminds us that it is part and parcel of an extraordinary crosscultural project.

For thirty years Merchant Ivory have depended on an international collaboration (the longest-running in the industry) between producer Ismail Merchant, a Bombay Indian who grew up during the violent years of Partition as well as the heyday of India's commercial movies, director James Ivory, an American from the mid-west, and Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, born in Cologne to Jewish parents of Polish-Russian extraction. A respected novelist and scriptwriter of fifteen Merchant Ivory productions, Jhabvala's marriage took her to India, where she lived for twenty-four years.

Influenced by the work of Satyajit Ray, Merchant Ivory were pioneers in representing Indian life to western audiences.

*The Householder* (1963), *Shakespeare Wallah* (1965), *The Guru* (1968) and *Bombay Talkie* (1970) explored contradictions in the lives of westernised Indians and the inability of westerners to come to terms with post-independence India. Emmet Long does not comment on the films' racial politics, but part of their originality lies in their unashamed preoccupation with the romance of another culture; with cultural diversity as the source of desire and pleasure as well as fear. Their unembarrassed treatment of mixed race love affairs suggests how much Merchant Ivory's films owe to an older politics, formed before 1968, both more internationalist and more liberal than today's 'identity politics'.

The idea of conflict within and between cultures has consistently marked their films - the clash between European romanticism and New England puritanism in *The Europeans*, between northern feminism and southern chauvinism in *The Bostonians*, and homosexual love between the classes in *Maurice*. But these oppositions are usually offset by a longing to transcend differences and find a secure place for oneself, an identity and a home. Emmet Long points out the centrality given to particular buildings in Ivory's locations, the white frame houses of New England, the deserted palaces of the Raj, ambivalent symbols of settlement. Sometimes Ivory's over-lyrical styliness can drown Prawer Jhabvala's irony: in *Quartet*, his loving recreation of Parisian cafés worked against the realisation of Jean Rhys' sense of placelessness.

Merchant Ivory are an anomaly: an independent company making 'quality' films about awkward subjects for an increasingly mainstream audience. They straddle the boundary between art film and Hollywood without belonging to either. Emmet Long is certainly less comfortable with the company's 'oddball

movies' like *Wild Party* or *Slaves of New York* and his lavishly produced volume reinforces their image as 'literary film-makers'. His book radiates culture, but of the sort that makes many want to reach for a gun.

Whereas Merchant Ivory's films have treated both the art market and the film industry ironically, they seem to believe in literature as a purely civilising art. In fact, Jhabvala's scripts have edited out some of the snobberies and cruelties of the liberal tradition: *Room with a View* was a far more genial celebration than Forster's own picture of the English middle classes; her *Bostonians* substituted a feminist triumph for Henry James' vicious climax. How can the limits of these novels and their milieus be exposed if their 'realism' is taken at face value? I am less sanguine than Emmet Long at the prospect of Merchant Ivory "finding their forbears in literature". Better to remain rootless.

Merchant Ivory's films offer us a dream of three continents (the title of one of Jhabvala's most ambitious novels); a never-never world like that of *Roseland*, their film set in the New York dance palace, where differences may turn sour but where romance can offer temporary resolutions. The company itself seems admirably to have represented humanistic ideals of co-operation and reconciliation. For some tastes this liberalism will always smack too much of faery tale; but faced with increasingly virulent forms of conservatism and radical sectarianism, we might feel like raising at least two cheers for their dream.

## Dracula has risen

Kim Newman

**Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of 'Dracula' from Novel to Stage to Screen**

David J. Skal, André Deutsch, £15.99, 242pp

By the time *Fangoria* appeared in the 70s, the horror movie magazine market had been dominated for twenty years by Forrest J. Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. It was as if the pun-slinging Forry had squeezed dry the Universal horror cycle of the 30s and 40s to the extent that there seemed nothing more to be learned about these films.

At the same time, Carlos Clarens, William K. Everson, Denis Gifford and Ivan Butler did more substantial critical work, evaluating Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, James Whale, Tod Browning and the rest. The 'official' classics of the genre were canonised, and the myth that the horror film produced nothing good after 1948 gained currency.

David Pirie, Robin Wood and *Fangoria* appeared in the 70s, to be followed in the 80s by *Sleazoid Express*, *Shock Xpress*, *Joe Bob Briggs*, and - with *Nightmare Movies* -

**Cultural crossovers:**  
Shashi Kapoor and Madhur Jaffrey in Merchant Ivory's 'Shakespeare Wallah', left. Exhuming the undead: Bela Lugosi in Tod Browning's 'Dracula', right, and Max Schreck in F.W. Murnau's 'Nosferatu', below





KOBAL  
myself. We argued about the reputations of Hammer Films, Wes Craven, George Romero and Dario Argento, and there was a general feeling that the old days were dead and buried and not worth revisiting.

The last few years, however, have seen a return to the roots of the horror movie. Gregory William Mank (in *The Hollywood Hissables, Karloff and Lugosi* and his introductions to the invaluable series of Universal film scripts from Magicimage), Tom Weaver and the Brunas Brothers (in *Universal Horrors*) have returned to the genre's shibboleths – the 30s Frankenstein and Dracula movies – and revealed that there is still much to be said about them. Mank's original research into the productions of the first horror cycle has rewritten the accepted history, and – along with the work of Weaver and Brunas – evoked a marvellous age, not of stately monster masters, but of lively compromise, half-mad geniuses and forgotten old-dark-house byways.

David J. Skal's book is among the best of this new-old school's output. It charts the not-so-simple progress of the *Dracula* property from Bram Stoker's imagination to the cinema, via the London and Broadway stage, Mrs Florence Stoker's crusade to rid the world of F. W. Murnau's masterly but unauthorised *Nosferatu*, and the Universal production that made Bela Lugosi a doomed star. Skal's punchline is a stunner: that the highpoint of this process was not, as might have been expected, Tod Browning's creaky 1930 *Dracula*, but George Melford's Spanish-language version, shot at the same time and on the same sets but with more cinematic flair.

Until such time as this Spanish *Dracula* – which, if not quite the lost masterpiece Skal describes, is markedly better than the English-language version – is widely available, this book will stand as its definitive testament. Skal brings his story vividly to life, especially when dealing with borderline crazy characters like Lugosi and Mrs Stoker, whose correspondence with the Society of Authors reveals a chilling moral rectitude combined with gila-monster tenacity as she tries to ensure her ability to live off her late husband's assets.

Skal's research puts many film historians to shame. Indeed, his coverage of the subject is so definitive one wishes he'd trebled the size of his book and followed the vampire figure in detail from the Universal years through Hammer, Frank Langella and Werner Herzog to the present day (a new adaptation of the Stoker book from Francis Ford Coppola is imminent). It's also a delight that the publishers have made *Hollywood Gothic* into such a beautifully produced object. Glossy paper and glowing monochrome illustrations showcase Skal's wonderful collection of little-known material.

The best critical writing revitalises its subject. The reader closes this volume wanting to take another look at *Dracula* or *Nosferatu* and longing to see that missing reel of the Spanish-language version. In this era of Freddy-hype and inept horror movie criticism, *Hollywood Gothic* is especially welcome.

## Popular choice

Andrew Higson

## **British Genres:**

Cinema and Society 1930-1960

Marcia Landy, Princeton University Press, £18.95, 553pp

A book on popular British films by an American academic: this must be something of a first, and is indicative of the current vogue for studies of popular culture and national cinema. In fact, as Marcia Landy admits, her study of some of the most pervasive of British cinematic genres in the years before, during and after the Second World War owes a great deal to work that has been published in Britain over the last ten or fifteen years. Reading this work through the broader perspectives of cultural studies, feminist film theory and genre theory, Landy has produced a rich and often illuminating book which, though sometimes dry, is certainly comprehensive.

Landy's project is to re-evaluate popular cinema, which, as she rightly says, has been difficult to view seriously in Britain because of the cultural weight of realist criticism and auteurism. She argues that genre films should be understood not as escapist, but as commentaries on and interventions in contemporary culture and society. In order to be successful at the box office, such films must address popular desires, aspirations and anxieties: they are ideologically ambivalent rather than unreservedly conservative as so many critics of 'mass culture' assume.

It is around the body and desire, sexuality and gender roles that Landy locates the most insistent tensions. She is on familiar territory when she argues that this is particularly true of the horror films and social problem pictures of the 50s. Her views on the historical films, bio-pics, empire films and comedies of the 30s are more challenging.

Landy does not accept the conventional view, formulated primarily in terms of class, that popular cinema during these years worked simply to maintain consensus and tradition. Rather, she suggests that such films began to air some of the gender conflicts that were to become central later. The Second World War becomes a pivotal period; the war films and melodramas sought both to articulate national consensus and continuity and to democratis the consensus by breaking with traditions of class and gender deference. Inevitably, the films expose the tenuous nature of the alliances they negotiate.

Landy's overall argument is good, but the processing of the argument is uneven. As with so many studies of the relationship between cinema and society, there is little social history here. Society is to be read through the films, and only rarely is this 'evidence' supported by other forms of historical investigation. Allied to this is the problem of what status can be attributed to Landy's interpretations of films.

At times she acknowledges that certain readings are only available retrospectively



## The ever-proliferating Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and friends

to the analyst. But since she claims that genre is a process of exchange between industry, auteur, text and audience, it is odd that there is no attempt to explore how the films were received by contemporary audiences (or whether they would have recognised her generic categories). Indeed, in the context of the new revisionist film history, the absence of any contemporary documentation in the references and the heavy dependence on secondary sources is poignant, especially when Landy draws uncritically on an eclectic range of theoretical models.

Like many of us, Landy is caught between a fascination with individual texts and the broader study of popular culture in this case, genres. While the latter is the ostensible focus of the book, it is actually dominated by surprisingly detailed analyses of a wide range of individual films. These are often fascinating, especially when the films are relatively unknown. The examination of genres is much less consistent: some are given a history, some are compared to Hollywood genres, and some are accounted for in conjunctural terms (strangely, the British musical doesn't exist).

Despite these problems, this is yet another affirmation that Britain had a viable popular national cinema during the middle decades of this century.

## Game boys and girls

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Angela McRobbie

## Playing With Power in Movies, Television and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

## **Mutant Ninja Turtles**

This adventurous and imaginative work boldly adopts a mode of research which, for the best of reasons, others have shied away from. Marsha Kinder uses her young child and his interactive relationship with television and TV-based systems of computerised entertainment as a starting point for her analysis. Nor does she defend this strategy, despite the well-known pi-

falls of 'using' children in this way. Instead she applies Susan Willis' maxim that "Professional women and their children... should work together in critical pursuits" to the hotly contested terrain of children and television.

What is remarkable about the study is first how successfully, without embarrassment or sentiment, Kinder achieves this objective, and second how far she has travelled from the moralistic and prescriptive terms which have dominated the debate about children's involvement with the mass media and popular culture. But there is another objective here, equally if not more ambitious. Kinder seeks to interpret, through the language of postmodernism, the cultural significance of the kind of trans-media intertextuality that now exists in one of its most developed forms in the children's and young people's sector of the market. She suggests that this revolution in 'entertainment' is one that taps into fundamental processes of subject formation.

Kinder draws with ease and fluency on psychoanalytical concepts from Freud, Lacan and Kristeva, as well as on the cognitive development theory of Piaget. Where appropriate she uses Althusser (she convincingly argues that television is now the most significant ideological state apparatus) but she is also indebted to Barthes' later work. And she integrates two additional features: a number of case study analyses of 'entertainment supersystems' such as *Ninja Turtles* and *Nintendo*, which she looks at in terms of the meanings they produce, their proliferation in interrelated systems, and the kinds of participation they elicit from their young fans.

Kinder brings back to this terrain an unobtrusive political economy. The significance of the market for these supersystems is documented at national and global levels. Japanese technology and understanding of the increasing interconnectedness of domestic software has captured the American market in the creation of images and products which articulate 'desire' and which are in turn part of the commodity system.

Marsha Kinder argues that these new interactive media systems have the potential to put television and cinema into a "memory bank" where they can be recalled as "prior discourses". Kinder's child Victor prefers video games to television, but likes the unpredictability of what's on TV, even the repeats. Television in turn presents him with its version of what cinema was and how it still occupies an important place in popular memory.

Alongside this is a continual interweaving of genres which enables the young viewer to experience the media complex not as a discrete set of segments and programmes, but as an endless flow of intertextual images and micro-narratives. This process addresses him/her not as the idealised subject of Lacanian psychoanalysis but as the mutable, protean subject of postmodernity.

Kinder eschews the idea that such experiences may be bad for children. Instead she concentrates on the psychic

work these systems do in replacing the beloved bedtime stories with images and symbols which play the same role in what she calls the "sleep bargaining process". Inadvertently, Kinder shows how children use the stuff that bombards them not just to fight their private psychic battles, but to outwit their parents. Through practice they soon become better at *Nintendo*, for instance, than their busy parents. They also have much to teach their parents about how the activity of play offers multiple opportunities to unravel the mysteries of the culture we are born into.

## Swinging Britain

Bruce Carson

### Sixties British Cinema

Robert Murphy, BFI Publishing, £14.95, 354pp

The 'swinging 60s' was a boom period for British cinema, with the international success of movies like *Dr No* (1962), *Tom Jones* (1963) and *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) attracting large influxes of mainly American money (though by 1969 financial crisis in the Hollywood major studios saw the return of hard times). Yet until now there has been no survey of this decade's fascinating legacy of films. Robert Murphy's *Sixties British Cinema* aims to fill the gap.

Part of the BFI's series *History of British Film*, Murphy's book sets out to refute the idea that 60s British cinema is empty and decadent. Murphy is concerned to re-evaluate lesser-known films and genres and to put them in their critical, social and industrial context. Thus there are chapters on the cycle of films associated with 'swinging London' and on the critically despised but popular British genres of horror, crime and comedy, as well as coverage of the better-known realist cinema of the late 50s and early 60s.

The 60s was a decade in which established cultural values were being challenged, the most interesting ideological tensions focusing on sexuality. In this pre-feminist era, sexual issues were most often discussed from the youth or male perspective.

Nevertheless, Murphy argues that although "women in the Kitchen Sink films suffer interminably", these characters have an emotional presence that is lacking in most 50s British cinema. Murphy also points to later films like *Joanna* (1968), *A Touch of Love* (1969) and *A Nice Girl Like Me* (1969) as offering a more complex exploration of women's experience.

However, it is in the arena of sexual politics that Murphy's book raises as many questions as it seeks to answer. For example, he rightly argues that 'swinging London' films like *Nothing But the Best* (1964), *Darling* (1965), *The Knack* (1965), *Alfie* (1965), *Morgan* (1966) and *Smashing Time* (1967) are far from being lightweight celebrations of material and sexual freedom. But what are the formal elements that distinguish a 'swinging London' film? Is their portrayal of the new 'permissive' moral climate a sufficient definition, as Murphy suggests? The cycle needs to be explored further in terms of the films' recurrent characters, themes and iconographic components.

Likewise, Murphy devotes little space to discussion of censorship. Although the British Board of Film Censors had abandoned most of its pre-war policies by the end of the decade, controversial films like *Performance* (1970), *Straw Dogs* (1971), *The Devils* (1971) and *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) came under attack from conservatives. Unfortunately, Murphy's strict periodisation prevents him from including the struggles arising out of the panics around the perceived permissiveness of 60s culture that were to come to a head in the Oz trial of 1971.

The strength of *Sixties British Cinema* lies in its attention to narrative detail, particularly in those films that have been little written about. Murphy rightly argues that Alan Parker and David Puttnam's dismissal of 60s cinema as "red London bus" movies is far from justified. He doesn't, however, deny that there were bad films during the decade, and points to *Can Hieronymous Merkin Ever Forget Mercy Humppe and Find True Happiness?* (1969) as one of the disasters. This valuable book's wealth of scholarship makes it an essential source for all students of British cinema, and a crucial intervention in the process of historical re-evaluation.



Challenging established values: Michael Caine and Shelley Winters in 'Alfie', above, and Malcolm McDowell in Kubrick's 'A Clockwork Orange', left

## Shorts

### Fred Zinnemann: An Autobiography

Fred Zinnemann, Bloomsbury, £25, 256pp

- Zinnemann recalls his childhood in Austria, his apprenticeships at the Paris Technical School of Cinema and with Eugen Schüfftan, Siodmak, Wilder, Ulmer et al in Berlin during the 20s, and his days as an extra in Hollywood in the early 30s. His reminiscences about working on each of his films are orchestrated by dramatic black and white photographs.

### Television Detective Shows of the 1970s

David Martindale, McFarland and Company, £41.25, 563pp

- Martindale cheerfully provides credits, plot synopses and episode guides for 109 detective series appearing on US television between 1965 and 1984. Many of the shows (for example, *The Rockford Files*, *Starsky and Hutch*, *Police Woman*, *Baretta*, *Longstreet*, *Hawaii Five-O* and *McMillan and Wife*) were also the staples of contemporary British television.

### Orson Welles: A Critical View

André Bazin, translated by Jonathan Rosenbaum, Acrobat Books, \$13.95, 138pp

- Bazin's classic profile of Welles' life and work has been out of print for some time. In this new paperback edition, a revised version of Bazin's 1958 text prepared shortly before his death is complemented by an introductory essay by François Truffaut written in 1975, and by a preface by Jean Cocteau, written in characteristically personal style.

### Pluralism, Politics and the Marketplace: The Regulation of German Broadcasting

Vincent Porter and Suzanne Hasselbach, Routledge, £35, £248pp

- An examination of the changing face of German broadcasting during the 80s, when the traditional duopoly of public broadcasters ARD and ZDF was challenged by private networks. The volume looks at the legislation which attempted to manage these changes, and how it was interpreted in practice.

### Doris Day

Eric Braun, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £14.99, 212pp

- Braun's intelligent, well-written biography reassesses Day's life and work, taking into account recent critical re-evaluations of the star and her films by both gay and feminist writers. He lists the star's awards and her recordings available on CD, as well as including a filmography, television highlights and a bibliography.

### Inventing Vietnam: The War in Film and Television

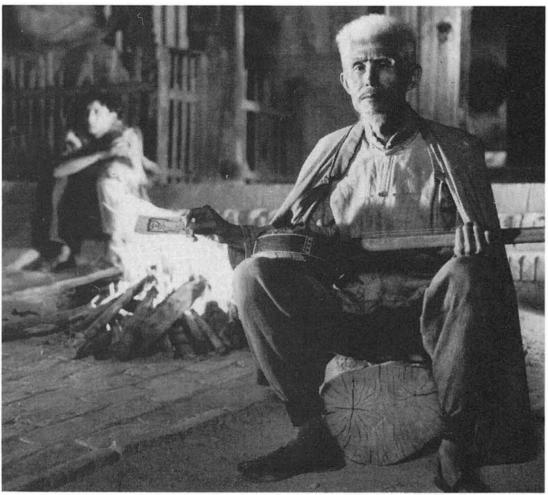
Michael Anderegg (ed), Temple University Press, \$49.95, 315pp

- A range of contributors that includes Susan White, John Hellmann and Ellen Draper investigate the way the Vietnam war was (and continues to be) played out in films and on television, looking at the representation of race and gender in movies from *Taxi Driver* and *Full Metal Jacket* to *Born on the Fourth of July*. A chapter on John Wayne and Jane Fonda examines how each contributed to the creation of a complex and contradictory myth of Vietnam in the American psyche.

# Reviews

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month's new films and new British TV films

## Bian Zou Bian Chang (Life on a String)



Against chaos: Liu Zhongyuan

### Certificate

(Not yet issued)

### Distributor

ICA Projects

### Production Companies

Beijing Film Studio/

China Film

Co-Production Corporation

(Beijing)/Serene

Productions (London)/

Pandora Film

(Munich)

In association with

Herald Ace (Tokyo)/

Film Four

International

(London)/

Berlin Film

Forderung

(Berlin)/Diva

Film (Rome)/

Cinecompany

(Rotterdam)

### Executive Producers

Cai Rubin

Karl Baumgartner

### Producer

Don Ranvaud

### Co-producer

Hong Huang

### Associate Producers

Hara Masato

Francisco Hayos

China Film

Co-Production:

Huang Guang

Xu Chunqing

### Music/Music

### Director

Qu Xiaosong

### Music Performed by

China Central

Philharmonic

Orchestra

### Songs

Qu Xiaosong, Chen

Kaige, performed

by Wang Di

### Costumes

Liu Jizong

Chen Jidong

### Make-up

Wang Lijiu

Hu Chaozhong

### Sound Editor

Uwe Lauterkorn

### Sound Recordists

Tao Jing

Music:

Martin Steyer

Dolby stereo

Supervisor:

Ray Gillon

### Sound Re-recordist

Hartmut Eichgrun

### Production Supervisors

Hong Kong:

Shu Kei

Berlin:

Michael Boehme

### Post-production Manager

Klaus Zimmermann

### Location Managers

Yang Kebin

Xu Xiaoqiang

Chen Baoquan

Zhang Qingdong

### Assistant Directors

Zhang Jinzhan

Cheng Jie

### Screenplay

Chen Kaige

Based on a short story

by Shi Tiesheng

### Director of Photography

Gu Changwei

### Colour

Eastman Colour

### Lighting

Ji Jianmin

Wang Zhenhua

### Editor

Pei Xiaonan

### Art Director

Shao Ruigang

### Set Decorators

Wang Chunpu

Location:

Wang Zhenqi

### Music/Music

### Director

Qu Xiaosong

### Music Performed by

China Central

Philharmonic

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### Songs

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Tao Jing

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Martin Steyer

Dolby stereo

Supervisor:

Ray Gillon

### Sound Re-recordist

Hartmut Eichgrun

### Cast

Liu Zhongyuan

The Old Master

Huang Lei

Shitou

Xu Qing

Lanxiu

Zhang Zhongyuan

Noodle Stall Owner/

God of Death

Ma Ling

Noodle Stall

Owner's Wife

Zhang Jinzhan

Lanxiu's Father

Zhong Ling

Pharmacist

Yao Erga

Retarded Man

at Noodle Stall

**9,270 feet**

**103 minutes**

### Subtitles

**China/United Kingdom/**

**Germany 1991**

**Director: Chen Kaige**

North-West China. An old, blind musician, revered as a saint by the peasants, travels with his unruly young disciple Shitou, also blind. The old man is sustained by a belief that his blindness can one day be cured by a prescription that he carries secreted inside his *sanxian* (three-stringed guitar); but his own master, on his deathbed, taught him that the prescription could not be filled until he had broken 1000 strings in the course of playing. Now he has broken 995 strings, but the end of his life is near.

The old man and Shitou walk across the desert to a settlement in the Valley of the Rams, site of a longstanding feud between the Lee clan and the Sun clan. When they are intercepted en route by a group of playful village girls, Shitou feels the first stirrings of sexual desire; he later loses concentration in his playing and singing. Despite the old man's reproof, Shitou seeks out the village girl Lanxiu and spends more and more time with her. The old man, privately agonising over the lifelong sublimation of his own sexual longings, falls ill, and Shitou tries to nurse him back to health.

When a pitched battle between the two local clans breaks out, Lanxiu begs the old man to intercede with his music, which has a magical power to quell violence. Shitou protests, but the old man rises from his sickbed and miraculously ends the battle. Discovering that Shitou has slept with Lanxiu, the old man slaps his disciple, who runs off. Next day, the old man goes out into the desert to play for himself alone. When he sets down his *sanxian*, the sun's heat causes the 1000th string to break.

Knowing that Shitou and Lanxiu are silently watching him, the old man leaves for town to fill the prescription. While he is away, Lanxiu's father and other men of the Sun clan trap Shitou and beat him up, as punishment for daring to love a village girl. Later, Lanxiu passes him a letter before committing suicide. At the town pharmacy, the old man learns that his 'prescription' is a blank sheet of paper. In a rage, he takes a sledgehammer to the grave of his own master.

The old man returns with a butterfly kite as a gift for Shitou. He consoles him, and advises him to keep Lanxiu's letter safely. That night, he plays and sings one last time for the peasants. Next day, Shitou supervises his master's funeral. Afterwards, preparing to set off on his own (with Lanxiu's letter secreted inside his *sanxian*), he is intercepted by villagers who

want him to be the new 'saint'. But Shitou insists on going his own way. The butterfly kite flies...

If Zhang Yimou's *Raise the Red Lantern* is the work of a man hankering for the kind of intellectual recognition that Chen Kaige routinely commands, then Chen Kaige's *Life on a String* conversely looks like the work of a man who wouldn't mind some of the popular acclaim that now routinely greets Zhang Yimou's movies. Much more self-consciously 'pictorial' than Chen's previous films, it offers a slightly mythologised vision of peasant life and culture on the Yellow River plateau, and contains (unless you count the mildly homo-erotic elements in *The Big Parade*) Chen's first attempt to deal with physical desires and passions – albeit still from a resolutely male point of view.

But the result is nothing like *Red Sorghum* or *Ju Dou*. Chen isn't interested enough in melodrama to make a real crowd-pleaser, and his tastes for fantasy and metaphor (first obvious in the scenes with the mysterious cowherd in *King of the Children*) constantly lead him into oblique plotting and unresolved ambiguities.

That said, there is nothing deceptive about the simplicity of the fable on which this film rests. It tells the story of two blind musicians and, more particularly, of a necessary breakdown in the age-old Confucian tradition of master-disciple relationships. The space between the saintly old man and his unruly pupil Shitou (the name means 'Stone-head') is less a generation gap than a radical difference of philosophies and attitudes. What starts out as a series of wrangles over obedience and disobedience soon broadens into a conflict between self-denial and sexual fulfilment.

Like all good fables, this one sustains a mass of interpretations. In broad ideological terms, for instance, the old man represents utopianism and Shitou represents pragmatism. Or, in the socio-political terms that currently preoccupy China's hated leadership, the old man represents 'order' and Shitou represents 'chaos'. Both Cheng Kaige and Shi Tiesheng (author of the more prosaic short story from which the film takes off) were victims of the Cultural Revolution, Mao-worshipping teenagers who were 'sent to the countryside' to 'learn from the people' in the late 1960s. Both, therefore, belong to the generation of artists who now feel a pressing spiritual need to analyse their own loss of faith in political solution and their uncertainties about life, love and the whole damn thing.

Chen complicates the fable in various engaging ways, all of them

designed to combat literalism. First, he introduces a number of teasing reflections on 'blindness': not only scenes in which Shitou is treated like a sighted person – Lanxiu cups her hands over his eyes and invites him to guess who; the village kids blindfold him for a game of blind man's buff – but also strange editing patterns which suggest that some of what we see should be understood as the subjective perceptions of a blind man and not as objective descriptions of action.

Second, and more disturbingly, Chen dramatises the old man's fears of death and sexuality by turning the peripheral characters of the noodle stall owner and his wife into harbingers of mortality. Appearing in the old man's fantasies (where they are joined by Lanxiu after her suicide), they posit themselves as the absolutes – "The one and only boss!" – against which he must measure his faith. Third, Chen and his regular composer Qu Xiaosong (another product of the Cultural Revolution, also now resident in New York) refuse to limit the music track to the styles and idioms of authentic Chinese folk ballads.

Most of all, though, Chen enriches the fable by declining to stand in judgment over his characters. Both musicians face crushing disappointments in the closing scenes. The old man fails to regain his sight, yields to anger and violence for the first and only time in his life and, as saints will, repents his sins and attains a kind of peace with himself. His passes on the prescription that failed him to Shitou, and his final advice to the boy is that he should go on playing – with the expectation of regaining his sight. Shitou loses Lanxiu and despairs at the unfairness of life, but keeps Lanxiu's unread farewell letter secreted inside his *sanxian* alongside the prescription. His last gesture in the film is to reject the role of 'saint' that the community tries to impose on him – and to fly his kite. Both men are justified, and neither has all the answers.

*Life on a String* is not Chen's best film; there are too many hints of portentousness (particularly in the over-used crane shots) for it to be entirely credible as a measured response to the current political impasse in Chinese culture, and the treatment of sexuality (especially female sexuality) is too conventional and too inhibited to be adequate to the demands of the subject. But where his erstwhile colleague Zhang Yimou is content to chronicle the 'unbreakable' traps of Chinese society in one feudal tragedy after another, Chen Kaige has never stopped asking questions – or flying kites.

**Tony Rayns**

## Black Robe

<b>Certificate</b>	15	<b>Music</b>	Georges Delerue
<b>Distributor</b>	Entertainment	<b>Music Director</b>	John Grundy
<b>Production Companies</b>	Alliance Communications (Toronto)/	<b>Music Performed by</b>	Strings Plus
	Samson Productions (Pymont, NSW)		The Sydney Philharmonia Choir
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Jake Eberts		Christopher Taplin
	Brian Moore		Phillip Hartl
	Denis Heroux	<b>Music Co-ordinator</b>	Martin Armiger
<b>Producers</b>	Robert Lantos	<b>Traditional Native Songs</b>	Lawrence Bayne
	Stephane Reichel	"Intertribal Round Dance" performed by Joe Campeau:	Neehatin
	Sue Milliken	"Ojibway Traveling Song" performed by Alex Skead:	<b>Harrison Liu</b>
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Eric Norlen	"Intertribal Pow Wow Song" performed by Alberta Cree	Awondoie
<b>Production Co-ordinator</b>	Martha-Marie Kleinhaus	<b>Early Music Advisers</b>	<b>Wesley Cote</b>
<b>Production Managers</b>	Susan Murdoch	Gilles Plante	Oujita
	France:	Doe Daphne D'Over Schoone Maeght	<b>Frank Wilson</b>
	Yanis Combe-Ferrier	<b>Costume Design</b>	Father Jerome
<b>Unit Managers</b>	Michel Chauvin	Renée April	<b>François Tasse</b>
	France:	John Hay	Father Bourque
	Jany Munoz	<b>Wardrobe Co-ordinator</b>	<b>Jean Brousseau</b>
<b>Location Manager</b>	François Sylvestre	Blanche Boileau	Champlain
<b>Post-production</b>	Supervisor:	<b>Make-up Artists</b>	<b>Yvan Labelle</b>
	Sylvia Walker Wilson	Head:	Mestigolt
	Associate:	Linda Gill	<b>Raoul Trujillo</b>
	Gordon Woodside	Set:	Kiotseton
<b>Casting</b>	Clare Walker	Penny Lee	<b>James Bobbush</b>
	Australia:	France:	Ondesson
	Alison Barrett	Christiane Berroya	<b>Denis Lacroix</b>
	Quebec:	<b>Key SFX Make-up Artist</b>	Taratande
	Elite Productions	François Dagenais	<b>Gilles Plante</b>
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	Pedro Gondol	Older Workman	Older Workman
	Carole Dubuc	<b>Gordon Tootoosis</b>	Old Aenons
	René Carre Jnr	<b>Marthe Tungeon</b>	Father Laforgue's Mother
	Buck Deachman	Old Priest	<b>Claude Prefontaine</b>
	France:	Deano Clavet	Mercier
	Christophe Vallee	<b>Paul Stewart</b>	Jerome-Raymond
<b>Screenplay</b>	Brian Moore	Chales	Jean-Jacques
	Based on his own novel	Blanchet	Blanchet
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Peter James	Workmen	Workmen
	Colour	<b>Marco Bacon</b>	Montagnais
	Eastman Colour	<b>Patrick Tenasco</b>	George Pachanos
<b>2nd Unit Photography</b>	2nd Unit	Iroquois Leader	Iroquois Leader
	André Fleuren	<b>Minor Mustain</b>	Minor Mustain
	Jean Lepine	First Iroquois	First Iroquois
<b>Camera Operator</b>	Danny Batterham	<b>Don Brisebois</b>	Tall Painted Iroquois
	Steadicam Operators	Iroquois Guard	Iroquois Guard
	Julian Chojnacki	<b>Jean-Baptiste Raphael</b>	Jean-Baptiste Raphael
	Rod Crombie	Iroquois Elder	Iroquois Elder
<b>Opticals</b>	Roger Cowland	<b>Guy Provencher</b>	Guy Provencher
	Editor	Old Iroquois Member	Old Iroquois Member
	Tim Wellburn	<b>Joe De Laronde</b>	Joe De Laronde
<b>Production Designer</b>	Production Designer	Tall Painted Iroquois	Tall Painted Iroquois
	Herbert Pinter	<b>Linlyn Lue</b>	Linlyn Lue
<b>Art Director</b>	Art Director	She Manitou	She Manitou
	Gavin Mitchell	<b>Bonfield Marcoux</b>	Bonfield Marcoux
<b>Art Department Co-ordinator</b>	Art Department	Domerque	Domerque
	Hélène Lafrance	<b>Wanda Obomsawin</b>	Wanda Obomsawin
<b>Set Decorator</b>	Set Decorator	Pregnant Woman	Pregnant Woman
	Real Proulx	<b>Jean-Pierre Perusse</b>	Jean-Pierre Perusse
<b>Set Dressers</b>	Set Dressers	Tallevent	Tallevent
	Jean Chasse	<b>Gérard Soler</b>	Gérard Soler
	France:	Masse	Masse
	Françoise Pauzia	<b>Alison Reid</b>	Alison Reid
<b>Draughtsman</b>	Draughtsman	<b>Brenda Adams</b>	Brenda Adams
	Jean-Yves Ahern	Iroquois Torture	Iroquois Torture
<b>Scenic Artist</b>	Scenic Artist	Women	Women
	Reet Puhm	<b>Denis Plante</b>	Denis Plante
<b>Special Effects Co-ordinator</b>	Special Effects Co-ordinator	<b>Daniel Thonon</b>	Daniel Thonon
	Louis Craig	Musicians	Musicians
<b>Key SFX Technician</b>	Key SFX Technician	<b>Cordelia Beresford</b>	Cordelia Beresford
	Pierre Rivard	Mademoiselle	Mademoiselle
		Le Fontaine	Le Fontaine
		<b>9,037 feet</b>	9,037 feet
		<b>100 minutes</b>	100 minutes

**Director: Bruce Beresford**

Quebec, 1634. Father Laforgue, a fervent young Jesuit priest from France, is setting out on an expedition upriver to Ibonatiria, a mission post set up to convert the Huron tribe. He is accompanied by a tribe of Algonquin Indians, led by their chief Chomina, and by Daniel, a young carpenter who pleads to go along as interpreter. The Algonquins are wary of Laforgue, whom they know as "Black Robe", and when he shows them the unfamiliar technique of writing, they suspect him of being a demon.

While Daniel forms a mutual attraction to Chomina's daughter Annuka, Laforgue is increasingly troubled by the tribe's sexuality; they in turn are unimpressed by the prospect of the sexless paradise he offers them. When Laforgue finds Daniel and Annuka making love, he is disturbed and scourges himself. Chomina is troubled by a dream in which a raven attacks him, and he identifies the raven as Black Robe. The party encounters a mountain tribe, whose medicine man Mestigoit tries to drive Laforgue out as a demon.

The Algonquins decide to abandon the Frenchmen; Daniel pursues them, and is nearly killed by a hostile tribe member, but Chomina intervenes to save him. Remembering his vow to protect Laforgue, Chomina returns to him with his family, but the party are attacked by a band of Iroquois who kill Chomina's wife and young son. The Iroquois plan to kill Annuka and trade the Frenchmen, but she seduces the jailer and they are able to escape.

They arrive at the place that Chomina saw in his dream, which he recognises as the place of his death; staying behind to die, he is welcomed by a vision of the death spirit, the She-Manitou. Laforgue leaves Daniel and Annuka, and makes his way alone to Ibonatiria. There he finds that fever has broken out and the Hurons have killed one priest, while old Father Jerome is dying. The tribe ask Laforgue to baptise them. Later, we learn, the Hurons were killed by the Iroquois and the Jesuits retreated from their territory.

After *Driving Miss Daisy* and *Mister Johnson*, another racial conflict parable from Bruce Beresford, this one played out at the intersection of *Boys' Own* and *National Geographic*. Brian Moore's screenplay, from his own novel, spells its argument out too clearly and too early. Its nadir is a scene in which Daniel tries to persuade Laforgue that the Algonquin way is just as valid as that of the French. Daniel

may be close to the tribe's way of life, but his argument, couched in implausibly eloquent terms, comes across as political correctness some 300 years before its time.

With his wild beard and proto-dreadlocks, Daniel is glaringly signalled as the 'natural' man, in opposition to Laforgue's prematurely wizened, fussy uprightness. The attempts to get inside Laforgue are of little help, as he functions throughout less as a character than as a representative of blinkered Jesuit colonialist ardour. He scourges himself, but we never learn what kind of sexuality or guilt is at stake; he writes, but it is unclear what struggles he records.

The film sets out with the best intentions to endorse the Indians' cultural and spiritual autonomy, using Cree and Mohawk dialogue. But it cannot help projecting the traditional 'noble savage' myths, all the more so in that the Indian iconography, its painstaking authenticity notwithstanding, also alludes to historical images of North American culture as found in illustrations of literary Romantics like Chateaubriand and Fenimore Cooper. The play-off between the Algonquins and the Iroquois, whose camp is an unalloyed place of horror, also maintains the liberal Western's traditional dichotomy of good and bad Indians.

*Black Robe* is less about the Indians' life and belief system than about the scenic landscape they inhabit, and about one man's inability to integrate into it. Laforgue finally reaches his goal, not as a colonising soldier of God, but on a far more personal mission. But the film lapses into uneasy ambivalence when the Hurons request baptism – even though they correctly predict it could spell the end of their culture. To the strains of Georges Delerue's heavenly choir, the film ends with a vision of the cross framed against the sun. As an echo of Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest*, it strikes a risible note, because it appears to reaffirm a creed that has been systematically questioned throughout. But it also reminds us that, compared to Bresson's angst-racked hero, Laforgue has had a pretty easy ride.

**Jonathan Romney**



**Incorrect: Lothaire Bluteau**

## Blame It on the Bellboy



**Adrift in Venice: Patsy Kensit, Richard Griffiths...**

<b>Certificate</b>	<b>Special Effects</b>	<b>Cast</b>
12	Terry Glass	<b>Dudley Moore</b>
<b>Distributor</b>	Tim Willis	Melvyn Orton
Warner Bros	Dave Eltham	<b>Bryan Brown</b>
<b>Production Company</b>	<b>Music Director</b>	Charlton Black
Bellboy Films	Guy Dadel	<b>Richard Griffiths</b>
For Hollywood	<b>Music Performed by</b>	Maurice Horton
Pictures Company	Guitar: John Williams	<b>Andreas Katsulas</b>
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Trumpet: Maurice Murphy	Scarpa
Steve Abbott	String Score: The Guildhall String Ensemble	<b>Patsy Kensit</b>
<b>Producer</b>	Synthesizers: Guy Dadel	Caroline Wright
Jennifer Howarth	Roger King	<b>Alison Steadman</b>
<b>Production Supervisor</b>	Trevor Jones	Rosemary Horton
Linda Bruce	<b>Orchestrations</b>	<b>Penelope Wilton</b>
<b>Production</b>	Trevor Jones	Patricia Fulford
<b>Co-ordinators</b>	Guy Dadel	<b>Bronson Pinchot</b>
Diane Chittell	Lawrence Ashmore	Bellboy
Venice:	<b>Music Editor</b>	<b>Jim Carter</b>
Francia Tasso	Robin Clarke	Rossi
<b>Production Manager</b>	<b>Songs</b>	<b>Alex Norton</b>
Rosanna Roditi	"Feelings" by Morris Albert, Louis Gaste; "The Perfect Moment" by Henry Priestman, Mark Herman, performed by The Christians	Alfio
<b>Unit Manager</b>	<b>Costume Design</b>	<b>John Grillo</b>
Claudio Carrer	Lindy Hemming	Hotel Manager
<b>Location Manager</b>	<b>Wardrobe</b>	<b>Andrew Bailey</b>
Enrico Ballarin	<b>Supervisor</b>	Shady Character
<b>Casting</b>	Anthony Black	<b>Ronnie Stevens</b>
Irene Lamb	<b>Make-up</b>	Man on Plane
Crowd:	Supervisor: Cherry West	<b>Enzo Turrin</b>
Daniela Fox	Dudley Moore: Brogan Lane	Senior Policeman
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	<b>Title Design</b>	<b>Andy Bradford</b>
Jonathan Benson	Plume Partners	Italian Victim
Melvin Lind	Capital FX	<b>Lindsay Anderson</b>
Antony Ford	<b>Sound Editors</b>	Mr Marshall
Venice:	Les Hodgson	
Guido Cerasuolo	Dialogue: John Ireland	
<b>Screenplay</b>	Footsteps: Peter Musgrave	
Mark Herman	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Peter Glossop	
Andrew Dunn	Music: Roger King	
<b>Colour</b>	Dolby stereo	
Technicolor	<b>Sound Re-recording</b>	
<b>Camera Operator</b>	Robin O'Donoghue	
Philip Sindall	Dominic Lester	
<b>Steadicam Operator</b>	<b>Speedboat Consultant</b>	
Massimo Monico	Sam Samuel	
<b>Opticals</b>	<b>Production Assistant</b>	
Peter Watson	Alessandro Bressanello	
Associates	<b>Stunt Co-ordinators</b>	
Editor	Andy Bradford	
Mike Ellis	Boat: Alfio Galli	
<b>Production Designer</b>	<b>Stunts</b>	
Gemma Jackson	Abbi Collins	
<b>Art Director</b>	Nick Wilkinson	
Peter Russell	<b>Armourer</b>	
<b>Set Decorator</b>	Gino De Rossi	
Peter Walpole		
<b>Special Effects Supervisor</b>		
Ian Wingrove		

**7,043 feet**  
**78 minutes**

**United Kingdom 1992****Director: Mark Herman**

Venice. With the aid of his henchmen Rossi and Alfio, renegade Mafia boss Scarpa tries to extract from a captive the name of the hit man contracted to kill him. Meanwhile, the hit man, Charlton Black, is en route to Venice under the pseudonym of Mike Lawton. On the same plane are Melvyn Orton, a nervous underling come to purchase a villa for his bullying boss, and Maurice Horton, a North Country mayor who (unknown to his wife) has fixed himself up a romantic assignation through the Meditate agency.

All three check into the Hotel Gabrielli. Confused by their similar names, the well-meaning bellboy gives each the wrong envelope. Black receives a photograph of Horton's date, Patricia Fulford; Orton gets the address of Scarpa's palazzo; and Horton is given a note from Caroline Wright, an ambitious young estate agent hoping to unload a Jerry-built villa and buy a speedboat with the commission.

Arriving at the palazzo, Orton is tied up and tortured. Black, shadowing Patricia around Venice, finds himself unable to kill her, and is further demoralised when she makes friendly advances. Caroline, intent on clinching a sale, is horrified to realise Horton expects sex, but submits for the sake of the speedboat. When Horton's wife Rosemary shows up unexpectedly at the hotel, Caroline traps him into agreeing to buy the villa. Black, learning that Horton is being sent £100,000 (the purchase money), assumes he must be a rival hit man. Scarpa reaches the same conclusion, and arranges to swap Horton's case with one containing a bomb, which the terrorised Orton agrees to detonate. Patricia, who has learned Black's true identity, persuades him to track Horton to the villa and take the money.

Scarpa, having acquired the other case, also follows, and casts Orton off in a dinghy to detonate the bomb. But Rossi and Alfio have both swapped the cases – and the bomb kills all three gangsters. Black, credited with Scarpa's death, gets his fee and retires with Patricia to open a florist's. Horton and Rosemary take possession of their villa, which starts to collapse around them. Orton, who has persuaded his boss to buy Scarpa's palazzo, absconds with the money – his getaway unwittingly aided by Caroline when her newly bought speedboat crashes into the police launch.

To command *Blame It on the Bellboy* for being short sounds like the worst kind of backhanded

compliment. But good farce needs to be fast, taut and economical – and in an age of Specially Extended Versions of already overblown movies, it's a pleasure to see a feature that runs a lean 78 minutes and knows just when to stop. *Bellboy* should also appeal to those who prefer their farce on the black side. Right from the opening, with the camera swooping down from a sunlit aerial prospect of Venice into a murky cellar where a man is being beaten to death, the film sardonically plays off the Canaletto elegance of its locations against the lust, greed and sadism that propel its characters.

Which is appropriate enough, given that farce thrives on the baser instincts – ours no less than those of the participants. A subsequent torture scene, though less brutal, still invites us to laugh as Dudley Moore's face is contemptuously poked with a fork like undercooked lasagna. Even so, *Bellboy* never aspires to the gleeful all-out nihilism of, say, *Blood Simple*. The heavies may meet with a suitably violent end, but the more likeable reprobates are allowed to get away with the loot.

Mark Herman (in his first film as director) draws well-judged performances from all his cast. Bryan Brown in particular, as the demoralised hit man, effectively subverts his usual granite-jawed persona, loosing off nervous shots at stray pigeons and dissolving into querulous self-pity: "You think you're lonely? You should try being an assassin!" Herman also keeps his plot mechanism running with just the right level of heartless precision, deftly juggling his three main narrative strands and whipping up the pace without any loss of lucidity. In the end, though, the plot is maybe too snugly constructed – what it lacks is the element of surprise. A touch more risk-taking might have lifted it from good farce to great farce – but a good farce is no mean achievement.

**Philip Kemp**

...Bryan Brown, Bronson Pinchot

**Cape Fear****Certificate**

18

**Distributor**

UIP

**Production Company**

Universal

**Executive Producers**

Kathleen Kennedy

Frank Marshall

**Producer**

Barbara De Fina

**Production****Co-ordinator**

Celia Randolph

**Unit Production****Manager**

Deborah Lee

**Location Manager**

Sherry Thorup

**Post-production****Supervisor**

Margery Mailman

**Casting**

Ellen Lewis

**Extras**

Ellen Jacoby Casting

**Assistant Directors**

Joseph Reidy

Nathalie Vadim

Deborah Lupard

**Screenplay**

Wesley Strick

Based on a screenplay

by James R. Webb

and the novel *The**Executioners* by John

D. MacDonald

**Director of****Photography**

Freddie Francis

Panavision

**Colour**

Technicolor

**2nd Unit Director****of Photography**

Burns Shoot

Underwater Sequence:

Pete Roman

**Camera Operators**

Gordon Hayman

Additional:

John Winner

**Opticals**

The Effects House

**Matte Paintings/****Special Optical****Effects**

Illusion Arts:

Syd Dutton

Bill Taylor

Matte Artist:

Robert Stromberg

Matte Photography:

Mark Sawicki

Optical Photography:

David S. Williams Jnr

Production Manager:

Catherine Sudolcan

**Editor**

Thelma Schoonmaker

**Production Designer**

Henry Bumstead

**Art Director**

Jack G. Taylor Jnr

**Set Decorator**

Alan Hicks

**Set Dressers**

Michael Calabrese

Robert Crowley

Eric Helfritz

Richard Howarth

Theodore Pappas

J. Randy Peterson

Lead:

Kevin Oates

Standby:

Stephen Durante

**Production****Illustrator**

Joseph F. Griffith Jnr

**Scenic Artist**

Genessa Goldsmith

Proctor

**Special Effects****Co-ordinator**

J. B. Jones

**Special Effects****Foreman**

James L. Roberts II

**Special Effects**

David A. Duval

Cary Jones

J. B. Jones Jnr

John F. Patteson

**Miniature Special Effects**

The Magic Camera

Company

**Certificate**

18

**Distributor**

Roger Lofting

Director of

Photography:

Paul Wilson

Art Director:

José Granell

Production Manager:

Susie Ford

Camera Operators:

John Morgan

Jonathan Taylor

**Music**

Bernard Herrmann

**Musical Director**

Elmer Bernstein

**Music Adapted/****Arranged by**

Elmer Bernstein

**Music Extract**

"Per te d'immenso

giubilo" from Lucia

Di Lammemoor by

Gaetano Donizetti

**Orchestrations**

Emile A. Bernstein

**Music Consultant**

Christopher Palmer

**Music Editor**

Kathy Durning

**Songs**

"Tipitina" by Alice

Byrd, performed by

Professor Longhair:

"Patience" by and

performed by Guns

N' Roses: "Do Right

Woman-Do Right

Man" by Dan Penn,

Chips Moman,

performed by

Aretha Franklin

**Costume Design**

Rita Ryack

**Wardrobe**

Supervisors:

Linda Hamilton

Vivian J. Cocheo

**Make-up**

Elizabeth Lambert

Robert De Niro:

Ilona Herman

Nick Nolte:

Edouard Henrion III

Jessica Lange:

Dorothy Pearl

**Special Make-up Effects**

Neal Martz

Burn Make-up:

Stephan Dupuis

Tattoos:

Temptu, Inc

**Title Design**

Elaine Bass

Saul Bass

**Supervising Sound Editors**

Skip Lievsay

Dialogue:

Philip Stockton

**Sound Editor**

Dialogue:

Marissa Littlefield

**ADR Editor**

Gail Showalter

**Foley Editors**

Supervisor:

Bruce Pross

Frank Kress

Steven Visscher

**Sound Recordists**

Tod Maitland

Music:

Shawn Murphy

Dolby stereo

**Sound Re-recording**

Tom Fleischman

**Sound Effects**

Andy Aaron

**Foley Artist**

Marko A. Costanzo

**Technical Co-ordinator**

Douglas Merrifield

**Production Assistants**

Jeffrey T. Barabe

Andrew Bernstein

Kristin Cameron

Noreen Compton

Rob Covington

Michael Feder

Jeff Fisher

Erin Garcia

Katy Harris

Chuck Parello

Juan Ros

Christina J. Stauffer

Christopher Swartout

Kai Thorup

Rebecca Weymouth

**Stunt Co-ordinator**

Leon Delaney

**Stunts**

Billy Judkins

Daniel Barringer

Bob Stevens

**Stunt Doubles**

Robert De Niro:

Doug Coleman

Nick Nolte:

Don Polford

Jessica Lange:

Donna Evans

Juliette Lewis:

Marcia Holley

**Marine Co-ordinator**

Moby John Griffin

**Film Extracts**

Problem Child (1990)

All That Heaven Allows (1955)

Allows (1955)

**Cast****Robert De Niro**

Max Cady

**Nick Nolte**

Sam Bowden

**Jessica Lange**

Leigh Bowden

**Juliette Lewis**

Danielle Bowden

**Joe Don Baker**

Claude Kersek

**Robert Mitchum**

Lieutenant Elgert

**Gregory Peck**

Lee Heller

**Martin Balsam**

Judge

**Ileana Douglas**

Lori Davis

**Fred Dalton Thompson**

Tom Broadbent

**Zully Montero**

Graciela

**Craig Henne****Forest Burton****Edgar Allan Poe IV****Rod Ball****W. Paul Bodie**

Prisoners

**Joel Kolker****Antoni Corone**

Correction Officers

**Tamara Jones**

Ice Cream Cashier

**Roger Preto****Parris Buckner**

Racquetball

Colleagues

**Margot Moreland**

Secretary

**Will Knickerbocker**

Detective

**Director: Martin Scorsese**

● New Essex, North Carolina.

Teenager Danielle Bowden remembers the summer she, her lawyer father Sam and designer mother Leigh were threatened by psychopath Max Cady, one of Sam's clients jailed fourteen years ago for rape and battery of a sixteen-year-old girl... While in prison, the illiterate Cady learns to read and discovers that Sam suppressed a promiscuity report on the victim which might have reduced the charge. He tracks down Sam and begins to harass him and his family. Sam offers Cady money to leave him alone, but he rejects the offer. When the family dog is poisoned, Sam goes to the police with his suspicions about Cady. Lieutenant Elgart arrests Cady, who is submitted to a complete body search, but advises Sam there is little else he can do.

Cady picks up Sam's mistress Lori Davis at a bar. Later, he viciously rapes and beats her. Lori refuses Sam's request that she testify against Cady because she doesn't want to be cross-examined. Sam is convinced that Cady plans to rape Leigh, but cannot get Elgart to act. He hires private investigator Claude Kersek to follow Cady. Kersek warns Cady to stay away from Sam, but he is unmoved. Cady telephones Danielle, pretending to be her drama coach, and arranges to meet her in the school theatre. Danielle is both attracted to and intimidated by his menacing sexuality.

Sam decides to take Kersek's advice that he hire thugs to beat up Cady. However, Cady overcomes his attackers. When Sam approaches criminal lawyer Lee Heller to take out a restraining order on Cady, he learns that Cady himself has appointed Heller to get a restraining order on Sam. The judge grants the order, and Heller announces his intention of getting Sam disbarred. Sam and Kersek lay a trap for Cady, leading him to believe that Sam has gone away for two days for his disbarment hearing, leaving Leigh, Danielle and their maid Graciella alone in the house. Kersek booby-traps the house, but Cady gets in and kills Graciella and Kersek. Sam panics and, informing the police that they will not return until Cady is arrested, drives Leigh and Danielle to the family's boat at Cape Fear, unaware that Cady is hiding underneath their car. A storm blows up, and Sam goes on deck to check the ropes; Cady grabs him and ties him up. Cady then locks Danielle in the hold while he attacks Leigh.

Cady brings Danielle out of the hold with the intention of raping her. But when he lights his cigar, she throws lighter fluid in his face and

he bursts into flames. Cady jumps overboard to douse the fire, but uncannily reappears on the boat and, holding Sam at gunpoint, orders Leigh and Danielle to take off their clothes. But the boat capsizes and mother and daughter jump into the river. Sam manages to handcuff Cady's leg to the boat. The boat breaks up and Sam goes overboard. Realising that Cady is helpless, he attempts to smash in his head with a rock. Cady survives and floats away, finally going under... Danielle's voice tells us that the family never spoke about him again.

● For a director as obsessed as Scorsese is with cinema history and as committed to working within popular genres, this updated version of J. Lee Thompson's 1961 thriller should come as no surprise. That he should approach the business of a remake in such a way as to earn himself a post-modernist-of-the-year award is equally predictable. The original *Cape Fear* is full of brooding menace in its deployment of B-movie excess. Scorsese litters his film with knowing references to its predecessor, ironically using ageing stars Robert Mitchum and Gregory Peck in minor but key roles and vamping up Bernard Herrmann's resonant original score.

De Niro as the underclass ex-con Max Cady is in a long line of Scorsese headbanger heroes, from Johnny Boy in *Mean Streets* to Travis Bickle in *Taxi Driver*. It was the latter film that took Scorsese into the mainstream, where he has struggled to survive ever since. One of the key questions raised by feminist critics at the time concerned the director's collusion in the creation of a misogynist pop aesthetic. If Scorsese didn't know his sexual politics then, and was 'innocently' working with genre, it's impossible to put forward such an argument in his defence today. But now post-modernism (already taken to its limits by David Lynch in *Twin Peaks* and *Wild at Heart*) has come to his aid. Scorsese can claim pastiche as his get-out clause.

A rape movie? A film in which the camera acts as violator? Which opens with a series of shots of a young girl whose body is viewed with unequivocally violent intent? Dangerous territory indeed – but rest assured, this is only a film. Moreover, it's a film about film – about the surface of the screen, about image-making. And it's about archetypal struggles between good and evil, the outsider who invades the fragile fabric of the nuclear family with the intention of destroying it. Think of pony-tailed Dennis Hopper in Wenders' *The American Friend*. It's even religious. Think of Pasolini's *Teorema*.

Scorsese's *Cape Fear* defies thresholds, revelling in its own

transgressiveness, using punchy visuals, fast cuts and a pounding soundtrack to reproduce the vengeful delirium of Cady's state of mind after fourteen years of incarceration. Moral absolutes are blurred. Cady desires revenge not because he was innocent, but because his sentence might have been reduced had his lawyer Sam Bowden revealed that his rape victim had a history of promiscuity. Bowden himself is clearly no clean-cut hero. As well as bending the law, he is having an affair with a young woman clerk while his unhappy wife languishes unsatisfied at home. A squash game between Sam and his mistress Lori parallels in its speed, noise and violence the later scene in which Cady viciously rapes Lori after she has allowed him to pick her up in a bar. Sam's wife and daughter are also attracted to Cady. Female desire, it seems, requires a dangerous, violent edge.

The early sequences fuse camera and ex-con as instruments of violation, no doubt encouraging the viewer to remember Powell and Pressburger's *Peeping Tom*. But they also bring to mind scenes of similar fusion in Scorsese's own films; the fights in *Raging Bull*, for instance, or the lyrical coming together of man and camera in *The Last Waltz*; Tom Cruise's erotic dance around the pool table in *The Color of Money*, or the ecstatic moment in *Mean Streets* when, after their boys' night out, the camera and cousin Michael almost kiss Johnny Boy. This dance with the camera is Scorsese's trademark – it's what he's good at. But when it comes to women characters, the range of narrative options dramatically narrows. Either they leave home after being beaten up once too often (*Raging Bull*), or they can become one of the boys (*GoodFellas*), or, if they persist in hanging out in the streets (*Taxi Driver*) or in the home (*Cape Fear*), they can expect the worst.

The second half of *Cape Fear* lurches towards the ridiculous. Scorsese seems unsure of himself, despite the dazzling camerawork. The excesses of the Max Cady character are hardly tolerable in the light of increasing cultural acceptance of sexual politics, no matter how many quotes from Nietzsche or Henry Miller are thrown about. The nervousness evident in the movie comes from Scorsese's own defensiveness. Films are more than just films. They reach out into the world – at least, they have to if they want to say anything to a popular (rather than a minority) audience, and Scorsese evidently wants to be popular. The greatest horror in *Cape Fear* is the death of imagination brought about by its suffocating reliance on pastiche.

**Angela McRobbie**

## Coupe de Ville

<b>Certificate</b>	12
<b>Distributor</b>	Warner Bros
<b>Production Company</b>	Morgan Creek
<b>Executive Producer</b>	James G. Robinson
<b>Producers</b>	Larry Brezner Paul Schiff
<b>Co-producer</b>	Mike Binder
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Jerry Baerwitz
<b>Production Controller</b>	Sheldon M. Katz
<b>Production Co-ordinators</b>	Florida: Sondra Dee Boyachek South Carolina: Rebecca Berwick
<b>Unit Production Manager</b>	Jerry Baerwitz
<b>Location Managers</b>	Florida: Gus Holzer South Carolina: Eddie Bowen
<b>Post-production Supervisor</b>	Jody Levin
<b>Casting</b>	Marci Liroff
<b>Voice</b>	Barbara Harris
	Additional Florida: Ellen Jacoby Casting
	International
	Additional South Carolina: Tona Hill
	Extras: Independent Castings
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	Dennis Maguire Rob Roda
<b>Screenplay</b>	Mike Binder
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Reynaldo Villalobos
<b>Colour</b>	DeLuxe
<b>Aerial Photography</b>	David Butler
<b>Camera Operators</b>	Craig Denault Chris Hayes 2nd Unit: Lowell Peterson
<b>Steadicam Operators</b>	Greg Lunsford Bob Ulland
<b>Editor</b>	Paul Hirsch
<b>Production Designer</b>	Angelo Graham
<b>Art Director</b>	Jim Murakami
<b>Set Decorator</b>	Don Ivey
<b>Set Dressers</b>	Frank Love Martha Sabina
<b>Storyboard Artist</b>	Carl Aldana
<b>Special Effects</b>	Greg Hull Mark Robinson
<b>Co-ordinators</b>	Will Purcell
<b>Music</b>	James Newton Howard
<b>Executive Music Producer</b>	Joel Sill
<b>Music Editor</b>	Nancy Fogarty

**Songs**

"(How Much Is That) Doggie in the Window" by Bob Merrill, performed by Patti Page; "The Wanderer" by Ernie Maresca, performed by Dion; "Crying in the Rain" by Howard Greenfield, Carole King, performed by The Everly Brothers; "Rubber Biscuit" by Samuel Strain Jnr, Shadrack Lincoln, Paul Fulton, Nathaniel Epps, Charles Johnson, performed by The Chips; "Sleepwalk" by Santo Farina, Johnny Farina, Ann Farina, performed by Santo and Johnny; "Da Doo Ron Ron" by Phil Spector, Ellie Greenwich, Jeff Barry, performed by The Crystals; "Shout" by Ronald Isley, Rudolph Isley, O'Kelly Isley, performed by Joey Dee and The Starliters; "Since I Lost My Baby" by William Robinson, Warren Moore, performed by The Temptations; "Speedo" by Esther Navarro, performed by The Cadillacs; "Transfusion" by Jimmy Drake, performed by Nervous Norvous; "Descarga No.2" by Ricardo Ray, Robert Cruz, performed by Ricardo Ray and his Orchestra; "I Only Have Eyes for You" by Al Dubin, Harry Warren, performed by The Flamingos; "Ooo Baby, Baby" by William Robinson Jnr, Warren Moore, performed by Smokey Robinson and the Miracles; "Yumbambe" by Joe Loco, Alejandro Campillo Gonzalo, performed by Poncho Sanchez; "Whispering Bells" by F. Lowry, C. Quick, performed by The Del-Vikings; "Whole Lot of Shakin' Going On" by David Curlee Williams, performed by Jerry Lee Lewis; "Could This Be Magic" by Richard Blandon, Hiram Johnson, performed by The Dubs; "Happy Birthday to You" by Mildred J. Hill, Patty S. Hill, performed by Rita Taggart; "Louie Louie" by Richard Berry, performed by (1) The Kingsmen, (2) Richard Berry, The Rice University Marching Owl Band, Les Dantz and his Orchestra, (3) The Sandpipers.

**Costume Design** Deborah Scott  
**Costume Supervisor** George Little  
**Costumer** Barbara Scott  
**Make-up** Elizabeth Lambert  
**Titles/Opticals** Pacific Title

**Supervising Sound Editor**

Michael Hilkene  
**Sound Editors**  
 Jeremy Gordon  
 Gary Krivacek  
 Eric Lindemann  
 Christopher Welch  
 John Wilde  
**Sound Recordist**  
 Carey Lindley  
 Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recording**  
 Chris Jenkins  
 Dennis Sands  
 D.H. Hemphill  
**Foley Artists**  
 Jerry Trent  
 Joan Rowe  
**Production Assistants**  
 Ruth Redfern  
 Jack Binder  
 Mark Bender  
 Patricia Conte  
 Mickey Edens  
 Allen Fisher  
 Nancy Mahaffey  
 Linda Pickett  
**Stunt Co-ordinator**  
 Mickey Gilbert  
**Stunt Doubles**  
 Arye Gross:  
 Troy Gilbert  
 Patrick Dempsey:  
 Rick Waugh  
 Elderly Man:  
 Paul Stader  
**Helicopter Pilot**  
 John Sarvis

**Cast**

**Patrick Dempsey**  
 Bobby Libner  
**Arye Gross**  
 Buddy Libner  
**Daniel Stern**  
 Marvin Libner  
**Annabeth Gish**  
 Tammy  
**Rita Taggart**  
 Betty Libner  
**Joseph Bologna**  
 Uncle Phil  
**Alan Arkin**  
 Fred Libner  
**James Gammon**  
 Doc Sturgeon  
**Ray Lykins**  
 Rick  
**Chris Lombardi**  
 Raymond  
**Josh Segal**  
 Billy  
**John Considine**  
 Kloppner  
**Steve Boles**  
 Don Tilley  
 Cops  
**Terry Loughlin**  
**Reid (Pete) Shook**  
 Gas Station  
 Attendants  
**Rod Swift**  
 Finkelstein  
**Fred Ornstein**  
 Barney  
**Don Sheldon**  
 Fishing Buddy  
**Boots Crowder**  
 Waitress  
**Edan Gross**  
 Young Bobby  
**Michael Weiner**  
 Young Buddy  
**Dean Jacobson**  
 Young Marvin  
**Steve Alterman**  
**Terrence Beasor**  
**Joe Chapman**  
**Brian K. Doughty**  
**Judi Durand**  
**Barbara Iley**  
**Carol King**  
**Bob Lessor**  
**David McCharen**  
**Larry Moss**  
 Additional Voices

**8,742 feet**  
**97 minutes**

**USA 1990****Director: Joe Roth**

In 1963, Fred Libner persuades his three estranged sons, Bobby, Buddy and Marvin, to drive a 1954 Cadillac Coupe de Ville from Michigan to Miami in time for their mother Betty's fiftieth birthday. Marvin, an uptight USAF sergeant, runs the car off the road and breaks a headlight. An on-the-spot \$250 fine leaves the three broke, so they sleep in the car overnight. The next day, Buddy intervenes when Bobby and Marvin argue about some money the former has held back. As the brothers continue their journey, their parents discuss Fred's recent visit to the hospital. Buddy falls asleep at the wheel and the car ploughs off the road into a field. After a furious argument, Marvin explains that the car is less important than their father's impending death.

Buddy visits his college girlfriend Tammy and is devastated to find her living with Rick. The boys ask their gambler uncle Phil to lend them the money to repair the car. Broke himself, he advises them to bet the \$90 raised by selling Bobby's treasured coin collection on a horse called Silver Stu. While Marvin and Bobby watch Silver Stu win, Buddy visits Tammy again and they sleep together. When Rick arrives and finds Buddy there, he beats him up; unbeknown to Buddy, Marvin in turn beats up Rick. The brothers take the damaged car to Doc Sturgeon the Cadillac surgeon, who agrees to fix it within twenty-four hours.

On their way home, the boys are waylaid by Rick, wielding a baseball bat and accompanied by his tough pal Raymond. Marvin acts crazy and they back off. On the last bridge before home, an elderly man crashes his car into theirs and

destroys the door. Nevertheless, Betty is thrilled and tactfully ignores the dent. A coda reveals that Fred died that winter.

This pleasantly talky road movie rolls along gently, the minor detours and incidental scrapes that make up the plot far less important than the discursive, *Diner*-style conversations which reveal the complex emotional texture of the brothers' prickly relationship. Although Mike Binder's semi-autobiographical script (updated by director Joe Roth from the early 50s to the early 60s) has a personal and affectionate tone, for the most part Roth's deft handling of it soft-pedals on sentimentality and nostalgia.

Much depends on the chemistry between the three protagonists, which produces some cherishable comic sequences. In a scene which recalls the absurdist 'Bonanza talk' in Barry Levinson's *Tin Men*, the three brothers launch into a heated discussion about the lyrics and intent of the classic Kingsmen number "Louie Louie": is it a hump song, a dance tune or, most bizarre of all, a sea shanty? This playful digression toys delightfully with the ambiguities of language.

Just as the journey narrative is little more than a device, so the safe arrival of the Coupe de Ville is not the real purpose of Fred's carefully conceived plan. For Joe Roth, the film is about forgiveness: the ability of the brothers to forgive one another, and their dying father's desire that they should forget past wrongs. One wonders whether Roth, founder of the independent production company Morgan Creek and now head of 20th Century Fox, would today have the nerve to commission such a worthy but commercially unviable project.

**Nigel Floyd**



Not about getting there: Arye Gross, Patrick Dempsey, Daniel Stern

## Double Impact

**Certificate**

18

**Distributor**

Columbia Tri-Star

**Production Company**

Stone Group Pictures

**Executive Producers**

Moshe Diamant

Charles Layton

**Producers**

Ashok Amritraj

Jean-Claude

Van Damme

**Co-producers**

Sheldon Lettich

Terry Martin Carr

**Line Producer**

Evzen Kolar

**Supervising Producer**

Rick Nathanson

**Associate Producers**

Kamel Kriifa

Honk Kong:

Charles Wang

**Post-production Executive**

Brad Arensman

**Production Supervisor**

Steven Brown

**Production Controller**

Catherine Roehl

**Production Co-ordinators**

Hong Kong:

Katherine Shaw

Venus Cheuk Yuen Yi

Los Angeles:

Oriana J. Bielawski

Associate:

Richard G. Murphy

**Production Manager**

Hong Kong:

Philip Lee Siu Wai

**Unit Production Managers**

USA:

Joel A. Douglas

Hong Kong:

Allen Wan Tak Fai

2nd Unit Hong Kong:

Chu Chung On

**Location Managers**

Hong Kong:

Neil MacDonald

2nd Unit Hong Kong:

Chu Chung On

**2nd Unit Directors**

Vic Armstrong

Andy Armstrong

**Casting**

James Tarzia

Extras:

Casting Group

Dixie Webster

Hong Kong:

Winnie Lak

Amy Lee

**Assistant Directors**

Thomas J. Mack

David Kelly

2nd Unit Los Angeles:

Jim Lansbury

Hong Kong:

Ken Siu Wai Keung

Weigo Lee Kwok Wai

2nd Unit Hong Kong:

Terry Needham

Amy Sheun Ka Wai

Kate Yurka

**Screenplay**

Sheldon Lettich

Jean-Claude

Van Damme

**Story**

Sheldon Lettich

Jean-Claude

Van Damme

**Director of Photography**

Richard Kline

**Colour**

DeLuxe

Prints by Technicolor

**2nd Unit Director of Photography**

Hong Kong:

John McCallum

**Camera Operators**

Hong Kong:

Richard Merryman

Stanley Hung

David Choi

Jimmy Wong

Los Angeles:  
Juergen Walther  
Additional:  
Howard Wexler  
Philip Carr-Foster  
2nd Unit Hong Kong:  
Cheung King Nin  
**Steadicam Operators**  
Peter Jensen  
Jeff Mart  
Dan Kneece  
**Special Visual Effects**  
Cinema Research Corporation  
Producers:  
Steve Rundell  
Bill Neil  
Co-ordinator:  
Genevieve Lovitt  
Location Manager:  
Molly Allen  
Editor:  
C. Marie Davis  
Optical Supervisor:  
Dion Hatch  
Optical Camera:  
Eugene Eyerly  
Steve Mayer  
Ernest Miller  
Robert Montgomery  
Optical Line-up:  
Leilani McHugh  
Jim Mini  
Rotoscope Artist:  
Jay Johnson  
Rotoscope Operator:  
Curt Winn  
Production Assistants:  
Donn Berdahl  
Judd Rea  
Frank Kirkland  
Santoyo  
Michael Schwartz  
Paula Martone  
William Enbrecht  
Craig K. Angell  
Louis Soeder  
**Motion Control**  
Image G  
**Editors**  
Mark Conte  
Additional:  
Brent White  
**Production Designer**  
John Jay Moore  
**Art Directors**  
Okowita  
Hong Kong:  
Rosa Pang Shiu  
Cheung  
**Art Department Co-ordinator**  
Clare Wang  
**Set Designers**  
Shelley Lynn Warner  
Gregory Hunt  
Van Horn  
**Set Decorators**  
Suzette Sheets  
Hong Kong:  
Eric Lam Yau Sang  
**Set Dressers**  
Jess Moreno  
Alexander L. Carle  
Robert J. Roule  
Mark Little  
Mike Vojoda  
Neil Hochhalter  
Timothy E. Walton  
Michael A. Mitchell  
On set:  
Jay Koiwai  
**Production Illustrator**  
Simon Murton  
**Storyboard Artist**  
Fred Lucky  
**Special Effects Co-ordinators**  
Hong Kong:  
Gene Grigg  
Los Angeles:  
Greg Landreher  
**Special Effects**  
Hong Kong:  
Rocky Gehr  
Rick H. Josephson  
Timothy J. Moran  
Los Angeles:  
Eric Rylander  
L. A. McConnell  
Carl Rylander

**Music**  
Arthur Kempel  
**Music Performed by**  
Synthesizers:  
Jeff Rona  
**Fight Choreography**  
Jean-Claude Van Damme  
**Costume Design**  
Joseph Porro  
**Wardrobe**  
Supervisor:  
Karen Wagner  
Hong Kong:  
John M. Young  
Gigi Choa  
Ella Tu  
**Costumes**  
Michele Knepp  
Deborah Slate  
**Make-up**  
Zoltan  
**Title Design**  
Neal Thompson  
**Titles**  
Cinema Research Corporation  
Video Research Corporation  
**Supervising Sound Effects Editor**  
Robert R. Rutledge  
**ADR Editors**  
Richard Marx  
Norto Sepulveda  
**Foley Editor**  
J. Allen Sargent  
**Sound Recordists**  
Itzhak "Ike" Magal  
Douglas Kearns  
Thomas Steel  
Foley:  
J. Allen Sargent  
Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recordists**  
Patrick Cycone  
Robert Thirlwell  
Allen L. Stone  
**Supervising Sound Effects Editor**  
Robert R. Rutledge  
**Sound Effects Editors**  
Steve Bushelman  
Sam Shaw  
Craig "Bo" Jaeger  
Jerry Stanford  
Robert Waxman  
**Voice Group Co-ordinator**  
Barbara Harris  
**Foley**  
Robert R. Rutledge  
Catherine Harper  
**Production Assistants**  
Hong Kong:  
Mark Mathis  
Ralph Scherer  
Chiu Ka Yu  
Barry Ho Yau To  
Kwok Wai Ki  
Henry Fong Ka Wong  
Tommy Wan  
Kwong Fai  
2nd Unit Hong Kong:  
Benny Au Yeung Hak  
Ming  
**Stunt Co-ordinators**  
USA:  
Vic Armstrong  
Hong Kong:  
John Cheung  
**Stunts**  
Jorges Casares  
Johnny Cheung  
Peter Malota  
Dickie Beer  
Darryl M. Chan  
Peter Lai  
Al Leong  
Willie Leong  
James Lew  
Simon Rhee  
Vernon Rieta  
Bill Ryusaki  
Danny Wong  
**Stunt Doubles**  
Georges Bejue  
Mark Stefanich

**Cast**  
Jean-Claude Van Damme  
Chad Wagner  
Alex Wagner  
**Geoffrey Lewis**  
Frank Avery  
**Alan Scarfe**  
Nigel Griffith  
**Alonna Shaw**  
Danielle Wilde  
**Cory Everson**  
Kara  
**Philip Chan Yan Kin**  
Raymond Zhang  
**Bolo Yeung**  
Moon  
**Sarah-Jane Varley**  
Katherine Wagner  
**Wu Fong Lung**  
Chinese Nurse  
**Alicia Stevenson**  
Baby Chad  
**Paul Aylett**  
Baby Alex  
**Andy Armstrong**  
Paul Wagner  
**Sarah Yuen**  
Nun at Orphanage  
**Julie Strain**  
Student  
**Eugene Choy**  
Mr Chen  
**Jack Gilardi Jr**  
**Dave Lea**  
Karate Students  
**Donn Berdahl**  
Karate Instructor  
**Chan Siu Sing**  
**Leo Lee**  
Dockworkers  
**Kamel Krifa**  
Mah Jong Manager  
**Galen Yuen**  
Smuggler  
**Christopher Leung**  
Crewman on Alex's Boat  
**Ng Kwoi Kai**  
**Chow Kwo Po**  
**Yu Wai Keung**  
Chinese Smugglers  
**Simon Cheung**  
**Shum Kin Sang**  
Hong Kong Marine Police  
**Lee Tat Chiu**  
**Lee Bing Chiu**  
**Wong Chi Kin**  
Triad Thugs  
**John Cheung**  
**Tsang Sing Kwo**  
Triad Gatemen  
**Ching Wai Chung**  
Card-playing Guard  
**David Ho**  
Big Thug Outside Lab  
**Peter Malota**  
Bodyguard with Spurs  
**Tam Chun To**  
**Eric Ng**  
**Chan Siu Wah**  
Klimax Klub  
Gangsters  
**Evan Lurie**  
Klimax Klub Bouncer  
**Ng Kwoi Kai**  
Mr Nyguen  
**Roland Lor**  
Klimax Klub Manager  
**Jennifer Stone**  
Klimax Klub Hostess  
**Rita Lau**  
Hostess with Frank  
**Wong Chung Ching**  
Walkie Talkie Thug  
**Johnny Cheung**  
Thug on Container  
**Georges Bejue**  
Thug Who Mauls Danielle

**9,849 feet**  
**109 minutes**

**USA 1991**  
**Director: Sheldon Lettich**  
Hong Kong, 1966: Soon after the opening of the Victoria Harbour Tunnel, Paul Wagner, one of the businessmen behind the project, and his wife Katherine are shot dead by Triad hit men hired by his business partner, Nigel Griffith, and gangland boss Raymond Zhang. Wagner's bodyguard, Frank Avery, rescues one of their identical twin sons, Chad, while their Chinese nanny flees with his brother, Alex, to an orphanage.

Los Angeles, 1991: Chad is now helping his 'Uncle' Frank to run a martial arts and fitness club. After Frank receives news of Alex's whereabouts, he and Chad travel to Hong Kong to meet him; Alex, a street-wise, small-time criminal, overcomes his initial disbelief and agrees to help them avenge his parents' death. Chad is mistaken for Alex, refuses an offer to work for Zhang, and is beaten up by Zhang's scarred henchman, Moon. Alex's girlfriend, Danielle, who works for Griffith, reluctantly agrees to check the tunnel file.

From their new headquarters in an abandoned building, Frank, Chad and Alex attack and destroy Zhang's drug factory. Chad delivers a bomb disguised as a case of French brandy to the Klimax Klub, where Zhang and Griffith are holding an emergency business meeting; it explodes but both villains escape after seeing Alex and Chad together. Chad and Danielle narrowly escape from Zhang's henchmen after an intercepted phone call in which she tells him that Griffith's old files confirm Frank's story.

Griffith's bodyguard Kara spots the brothers' headquarters from the air. Unjustly jealous of Chad, Alex attacks his brother and they fight; Chad is leaving when Zhang's men

launch an all-out attack on the headquarters. Frank and Danielle are captured but Alex and Chad track them to The Golden Glory, a ship laden with drugs bound for America. While Frank is tortured by Zhang and Griffith's hoods, Chad kills Moon and Alex kills Kara. Chad then kills Griffith, and Alex throws Zhang from a crane tower. As Chad and Alex and Danielle are reunited, Frank staggers into view.

Courtesy of some rudimentary optical effects, Belgian martial artist Jean-Claude Van Damme plays twin brothers in this old-fashioned action movie, displaying a lighter side to his personality as the naive and sartorially elegant Chad in contrast to street-wise action man Alex. This strategy has worked well for Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone; unfortunately, on the screen charisma scale, Van Damme ranks only slightly above that other master of Zen emptiness, Chuck Norris. So despite a few half-hearted gags about Chad's boyish innocence and lack of street combat experience, this device only comes into its own in gimmicky scenes like that in which Alex and Chad come to blows and Van Damme is forced to fight himself.

The film is at its best when it gets back to basics, as in the fight to the death between Chad and his fearsome, scarred nemesis Moon. The climactic confrontation between Alex and Griffith's fetishistically dressed lesbian bodyguard, Kara, on the other hand, epitomises a nasty undercurrent of homophobia which runs through the film. Director Sheldon Lettich directs the two Van Dammes with a singular lack of style, constantly allowing the pace to flag and relying far too heavily on slow motion in the choreographed fight scenes.

**Nigel Floyd**



Double negative: Jean-Claude Van Damme

## La Double Vie de Véronique (The Double Life of Véronique)

**Certificate**

15

**Distributor**

Gala

**Production**

Companies

Sideral Productions  
In association with  
Le Studio Canal Plus/

TOR Production/

Norsk Film

**Executive Producers**Bernard-P. Guiremand  
Poland:  
Ryszard Chutkowski**Producer**

Leonardo de la Fuente

**Co-producer**

Ryszard Straszewski

**Production Manager**

Daniel Szuster

**Casting**

Margot Capelier

Caroline Castelain

France:

Catherine Maloubier

**Screenplay**

Krzysztof Kieślowski

Krzysztof Piesiewicz

**Polish Dialogue****Adaptation**

Martin Latallo

**Director of****Photography**

Slawomir Idziak

In colour

**Editor**

Jacques Witte

**Production**

Designers

Patrice Mercier

Halina Dobrowska

**Art Director**

Krzysztof Zanussi

**Puppets**

Bruce Schwartz

**Music**

Zbigniew Preisner

**Music Director**

Antoni Wit

**Music Extract**

Dante - 2nd Song

"Verso il cielo"

**Music Performed by**

The Polish Radio and

Television Orchestra

of Katowice

Philharmonic

Choirs of Silesia

Soprano:

Elzbieta Towarnicka

Flute:

Jacek Ostaszewski

**Costumes**

Laurence Brignon

Claudy Fellous

Elzbieta Radke

**Make-up**

Agnès Tassel

Iwona Skwarka

Jolanta Stachcka

**Sound Editors**

Edith Vassard

Michèle Catonne

**Sound Recordists**

William Flageollet

Jean-Pierre Lelong

Mario Melchiori

Jack Julian

Dolby stereo

**Sound Re-recordist**

Patrice Severac

**Production Advisers**

Greta Lahaje

Alejandro de la Fuente

Elizabeth de la Fuente

Ruben Korenfeld

Raymond Parizer

**Production**

Collaborators

Maciej Wojtulewicz

Jozef Tutař

Euzobia Rubaszewska

Ewa Sikora

Jolanta Stęć

Elzbieta Słupińska

Anna Ignatiuk

Agnieszka Skawińska

**Production**

Assistants

Gérard Monier

Christine Gaymay

Brigitte Chaussade

Thibault Leflaive

Laurent Salotti

Pierre-Yves Ferrandis

Włodzimierz

Dziatkiewicz

**Cast**Irène Jacob  
IDubbed in Polish  
by Anna Gronostaj  
Weronika/Véronique  
Halina  
Gryglaszewska  
Aunt  
Kalina Jedrusik  
Gaudy Woman  
Aleksander Bardini  
Orchestra Conductor  
Włodzisław Kowalski  
Weronika's Father  
Jerzy Gudejko  
Antek  
Jan Sterniński  
Lawyer  
Philippe Volter  
Alexandre Fabbri  
Sandrine Dumas  
Catherine  
Louis Dureux  
Teacher  
Claude Duneton  
Véronique's Father  
Lorraine Evanoff  
Claude  
Guillaume  
de Tonquedec  
Serge  
Gilles Gaston-  
Dreyfus  
Jean-Pierre  
Alain Frerot  
Postman  
Youssef Hamid  
Railwayman  
Thierry de  
Carbognieres  
Professor  
Chantal Newirth  
Receptionist  
Nausicaa Rampony  
Nicole  
Boguslawa Schubert  
Woman with Hat  
Jacques Potin  
Man in Grey Coat  
Nicole Pinaud  
Philippe Campos  
Beata Malczewska  
Dominika Szady  
Barbara Szalapa  
Jacek Wójcicki  
Lucyna Zabawa  
Wanda Krużewska  
Bernadetta Kus  
Pauline Monier**8,805 feet**  
**98 minutes****Subtitles****France 1991****Director: Krzysztof Kieślowski**

Poland, 1990. A young woman, Weronika, tells her father she has a strange feeling of not being alone in the world, and decides to go to Cracow to visit her aunt. Asked by a friend to join her at a choir rehearsal, Weronika sings along impromptu and is invited to audition. During a political demonstration, Weronika becomes aware of a young woman identical to her, taking photographs from a coach. At an audition with a conductor, Weronika suffers a twinge of pain; she nearly collapses in the park on the way home, where a man exposes himself to her. In the street, she meets her boyfriend Antek, who has followed her to Cracow. Having won the singing competition, Weronika suddenly dies on stage while singing the lead in a concert.

In France the same day, an identical young woman, Véronique, tells her lover of a sense of grieving. She tells her music teacher that she is giving up singing, for reasons she doesn't fully comprehend. At the school where she teaches music, she attends a show by a marionettist, who performs a story about a ballerina transformed into a butterfly. During the show, she catches his eye in a mirror, and later encounters him when they are stopped at a traffic light. One night, she receives a phone call in which she hears breathing, a man's voice, and an extract from a piece of music that she is teaching at school (the same music that Weronika was singing when she died).

Visiting her father in the country, she confesses that she is in love. She offers to go to court for a colleague and testify as co-respondent in her divorce case. A letter arrives containing a shoelace, like one Weronika used to play with. Véronique learns that the marionettist is Alexandre Fabbri, a writer of children's stories, including one about a shoelace. When another package arrives, Véronique guesses correctly that it contains an empty cigar box. At her father's, she receives a cassette tape containing the sounds of typing, a car, a train, and the voice of a café waitress. Seeing that it has been sent from the Gare Saint-Lazare, she goes to Paris and finds Alexandre waiting for her in a café.

He explains he sent her the packages as a psychological experiment for a novel he is writing. Upset, she runs away, but he finds her at her hotel, and they profess their love for each other. He discovers the picture of Weronika that she unknowingly took while on holiday in Cracow. She breaks down in tears and they make love. At Alexandre's house, he shows her two dolls he

has made of her, and reads her a story about two girls who lead parallel lives, which he intends to call "The Double Life of...". Visiting her father again, Véronique rushes into his arms.

With its obsessive brooding on objects – their unearthly light, their depths of emotive resonance, their portentous presence – it would be fair to say that *The Double Life of Véronique* is concerned with the luminous, the numinous and the ominous. Foremost in the film's system of objects is the mirror, as befits a story about duality and specularity. Mirrors are everywhere, splitting up the screen, reflecting and refracting gazes, multiplying space: the mirror in which Véronique first sees her lover, the mirror manipulated by a child across the street to throw a strange light into her room, and finally the dual image of Véronique embracing her father.

But the film's multiplication of space, time and identity is sufficiently indeterminate to open up the narrative far beyond a clear-cut dualism. Even the *doppelgänger* premise alluded to in the title is ambivalent. The story may be about one woman with a double life, about two women with one life between them, or about two entirely separate lives. Not only are events and characters doubled, but so is the narrative itself. The tape Véronique receives, apparently a recording of earlier events, is also a pre-recording, a prediction of things she will witness in Paris. Her meeting with Alexandre will inspire him to write a story called "The Double Life of...", but that is already (partly) the title of the fiction in which she is a character – a fiction already written by him, at least insofar as he has scripted his manipulation of her.

Seen in this light, the film might seem a fairly conventional box of ontological tricks, recycling traditional metafictional paradoxes. But it offers enough texture and energy to escape the formalist bounds it ostensibly sets itself. Irène Jacob's performance is crucial in this respect, for it completely resists her integration into the film as a mere cypher; this is all the more impressive since her part is essentially a function, duality personified. In the first close-up of Weronika, a choir disperses around her and she remains stock still, relishing a sudden downpour and holding on to one last long note. Weronika, we see here, is isolated within the world yet ready to react to it intensely. The two Veronicas seem to be the toys of chance, yet it is their child-like responsiveness to the moment that makes chance.

But what, or who, really determines the lives of the

Veronicas? Although they appear to be in control, they don't so much make decisions as follow the obscure promptings of fate, or of something that the film implies to be innate female insight (as exemplified by the tarot-reading aunt). They seem to make their own amorous decisions, yet Véronique falls for a puppeteer who aspires to manipulate her, to turn her into one of his somewhat precious figurines. The Veronicas certainly inhabit a male world, without mothers and with an overabundance of fathers (real fathers, as well as surrogate ones in the form of singing teachers).

This circle is broken, however, by a fundamental reconciliation. The whole film works towards that moment when Véronique will recognise herself in the Cracow photo and finally reciprocate the searching gaze of Weronika. It is only this reciprocity of female looks that salvages the film from the suspicion that Weronika/Véronique is entirely an object of male construction.

Véronique's reconciliation is also, finally, with the world from which she had been isolated. Both women occupy their own hermetic realm, tending to see the world through their inverting globe, or moving at odds to it. In a pivotal scene, Weronika walks through a political demonstration, oblivious to all but her own mirror image. This is one of only two explicitly political moments, the other being an early shot of a huge statue being towed away (a father figure cut down? an end of monolithic Communism, giving way to Weronika's solipsistic individualism?). That the film otherwise seems so pervasively apolitical must frustrate anyone interested in Kieślowski's motives for working in the East and the West in the same film.

East and West finally seem to form merely another of the mirrorings that structure the film. Véronique comes across as a European art film, cerebral as well as sensual, and using the stylistic devices characteristic of a Resnais. The analytical realism of the *Dekalog*, with its grey panoramas and sense of a harsh encroaching world, is replaced with close-ups, shots through globes, and a sometimes stifling golden glow of amniotic well-being, as if the Veronicas' lives were enclosed in a protective bubble that can only be shattered by the viewer's eye. It is hard to decide what we're seeing here – a hermetic narrative game, a moral parable about the dangers of solipsism, or simply a confused inquiry into the Mystery of Woman. But the film's teasing paradoxes make for a complexity that is considerably more than double.

**Jonathan Romney**

Original US title: Dutch

**Certificate** 12  
**Distributor** 20th Century Fox  
**Production Company** 20th Century Fox  
**Executive Producer** Tarquin Gotch  
**Producers** John Hughes, Richard Vane  
**Production Co-ordinator** Lisbeth Wynn-Owen  
**Production Manager** John J. Smith  
**Location Managers** Dow Griffith  
 Additional: F. Stanley Pearse Jnr  
**Casting** Jane Jenkins, Janet Hirshenson  
 Extras LA: Central Casting  
 Chuck Mayturn  
 Extras Chicago: Holzer, Roche & Ridge  
**Assistant Directors** Josh McLaglen, Christopher T. Gerrity, Richard "Dub" Wright  
**Screenplay** John Hughes  
**Director of Photography** Charles Minsky  
**Colour** DeLuxe  
**2nd Unit**  
**Photography** Paul Pollard  
**Camera Operators** Tom Connole  
**B Camera Operators** Paul Pollard  
 Atlanta: Jack Richards  
**Steadicam Operators** Bob Ulland, Rusty Geller, Randy Nolen  
**Editors** Paul Hirsch, Adam Bernardi  
 Additional: Melissa Bretherton  
**Co-editor** Ric Shaine  
**Production Designer** Stan Jolley  
**Art Directors** Tracy Bousman, Chris Burian-Mohr  
**Set Decorator** Jackie Carr  
**Illustrator** Jack Johnson  
**Special Effects**  
**Co-ordinator** Dennis Dion  
**Special Effects**  
**Foreman** Daniel Sudick  
**Music** Alan Silvestri  
**Orchestrations** Bill Ross, Jim Campbell  
**Supervising Music Editor** Ken Karman  
**Music Editor** Andrew Silver  
**Music Co-ordinator** Karyn Rachtman  
**Songs** "Snatch It Back and Hold It" by Amos Wells, performed by Junior Wells; "Flatfoot Sam" by Clara Wills, performed by TV Slim; "Pipeline" by Bob Spickard, Brian Carman, performed by The Ventures; "Wrong Side of the Tracks" by Jimmy Haynes, Tom Morris, Ron Young, Louren Molinaire, Fidel Paniagua, performed by Little Caesar; "Desire", "Otto Di Catania", "Tied Up" by Boris Blank, Dieter

Meier, performed by Yello; "Till the End of the World Rolls Around" by Thomas Newton, performed by Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys; "Guitars, Cadillacs" by and performed by Dwight Yoakam; "One Piece at a Time" by Wayne Kemp, performed by Johnny Cash; "Shake It Baby" by John Hughes III, Matt Deakin, performed by 2 Y.Z., Andrea Salazar; "Only Daddy That'll Walk the Line" by Ivy J. Bryant, performed by The Kentucky Headhunters; "Beyond the Blue Horizon" by Leo Robin, Richard A. Whiting, W. Franke Harling, performed by Lou Christie; "Give a Little Love" by Albert Hammond, Diane Warren, performed by Ziggy Marley & The Melody Makers  
**Costume Design** Jennifer Parsons  
**Costumers** Men: Michael Hoffman  
 Women: Elaine Maser  
**Make-up Artist** James McCoy  
**Title Design** Saxon/Ross Film Design  
**Titles/Opticals** Pacific Title  
**Sound Editors** Dan Rich  
 David McMoyer, Richard Dwan, Ascher Yates, Glenn T. Morgan, Christopher Assells, Stuart Copley, Jay B. Richardson, Per Hallberg  
 Digital: Chris Hogan  
**Supervising ADR Editor** Stan Gilbert  
**ADR Editors** Mary Andrews, Laura Graham  
**ADR Group Co-ordinator** Leigh French  
**Supervising Foley Editor** Dan Hegeman  
**Sound Recordists** Stephan Von Hase, Tim Webb, Chris Connolly  
 Music: Dennis Sands, Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recording** Chris Carpenter, Rick Hart, Kevin E. Carpenter  
**Supervising Sound Effects Editors** Lon F. Bender, Larry Kemp  
**Foley Artists** Christopher Moriana, Catherine Harper  
**Tae Kwon Do Adviser** Jeff Imada  
**Production Assistants** Scott Wright, Peter Pav, Jim Cirillo, Rob Nicoll, Walter Kovach, John Smith Jnr, Jeff LoGrasso  
**Stunt Co-ordinator** Buddy Joe Hooker

9,664 feet  
 107 minutes

**Stunts** Bobby Bass, Janet S. Brady, Doc C. Charbonneau, Annie Ellis, Allan Graf, B.H. Hooker, Michael Lee Kirk, Gene LeBell, Chad Randall, Pat Romano, Dick Ziker  
**Helicopter Pilot** Robert "Bobby" Zajonc

**Cast**  
**Ed O'Neill** Dutch Dooley  
**Ethan Randall** Doyle Standish  
**JoBeth Williams** Natalie Standish  
**Christopher McDonald** Reed Standish  
**Ari Meyers** Brock  
**E.G. Daily** Halley  
**L. Scott Caldwell** Homeless Woman  
**Kathleen Freeman** Gritzi  
**Lisa Figus** Cedering Fox  
**Shelby Leverington** Party Woman  
**Kyle Fredericks** Maid  
**David James Alexander**  
**Ross Borden** Men  
**Joe Baker** Party Butler  
**Laura Brumage** Party Guest  
**Will Nipper** Teddy  
**Robert Sutherland**  
**Telfer** Schoolboy  
**Patricia Darbo** Greasy Spoon Waitress  
**Ron Payne** Greasy Spoon Cook  
**Tom Chatlos** Customer at Counter  
**Ina Edell** Woman at Counter  
**Warren Rice** Man at Booth  
**Mickey Jones** Truckdriver  
**Brenda Pickleman** Motel Waitress  
**Billy "Sly" Williams** Man with Blaster  
**Jerry Darr** Whitey on Bus  
**Vincent Craig**  
**Dupree** Blackman on Bus  
**Sam Menning** Elderly Man  
**Tracy J. Connor** Gas Station Waitress  
**Theresa Bell** Grace  
**Pat Asanti**  
**Barry Doe** Watchmen  
**Phyllis Franklin** Yippie Waitress  
**J.C. MacKenzie** Mike Malloy  
**Ann Hearn** Riva Malloy  
**Gene Whittington** Homeless Father  
**Jesshaye Callier** Homeless Child  
**Jack Murdock** Homeless Man  
**2nd Truck Driver** Jackie Lee Sander

## USA 1991

**Director: Peter Faiman**

Doyle Standish is twelve years old and a snob. He bitterly resents his working-class mother, Natalie, blaming her for his parents' divorce, and taking after his wealthy, arrogant father, Reed. When Reed backs out of their planned Easter holiday, ostensibly for business reasons, Doyle rejects his mother's offer of hospitality, preferring to wallow in self-pity at the deserted Atlanta boarding-school he attends.

Natalie's new boyfriend, Dutch, a working-class contractor, promises to drive down from Chicago and bring the boy home. Doyle refuses to leave – he feels Dutch with a golf club and shoots him with an air pistol – and Dutch has to bind and gag him and deposit him in the back seat. As the journey progresses, Dutch tries to win the boy over, but they argue about class, the radio, and who is tougher. When Doyle goes too far, Dutch throws him out into the snowy night and tells him to walk to the nearest motel.

When he catches up, Doyle steals the car and abandons it in the middle of the road, where it is demolished by a truck. Momentarily afraid that Doyle was inside it, Dutch is assured that was the intention. Partly for revenge, and partly to give himself longer to win the boy over, Dutch insists that they hitch-hike the rest of the way. They land a ride with two blonde call girls, but while Doyle has a heart-to-heart in the back seat, the driver relieves the sleeping Dutch of his wallet. Dumped at a roadside café, the pair have an emotional showdown. Dutch is for giving up, phoning Natalie for help, and calling it quits with her. Doyle – who phones his father, and realises that he cancelled their holiday to be with a woman – insists that they can make it on their own. Stealing a ride in the back of a truck, they are taken for vagrants and spend the night in a hostel. There Doyle reveals how far he has come by establishing a relationship with a cute black child. The next morning, they finally arrive home. Reed makes a belated bid for his son, but Doyle chooses to stay with his mother and his new friend, Dutch.

Although John Hughes is generally seen as a sentimentalist, the Hughes 'family' is characterised by schism, ineffectual parents and bitter children. Curly Sue is an orphan, but all Hughes' kids are emotionally orphaned, home alone like Macaulay Culkin, or alone at boarding-school like Doyle (Ethan Randall) in *Driving Me Crazy*. Forced to rely on his own wits, Doyle is typically precocious: a talented student, a musician, a brown belt

in the martial arts, and enough of an aristocrat to spurn his nouveau riche, alimony-dependent mother. But if Doyle is accomplished, he is not fulfilled. Self-sufficiency is all very well, suggests Hughes, but it's no substitute for a good, healthy family life.

This proves just as true for his adult protagonists. Like Uncle Buck (and other roles John Candy has played for Hughes), Dutch is a bachelor with a need for a ready-made family. There is a childish streak in him (his idea of a good time is fireworks, pretzels, and a pack of racy playing cards), which may explain why he is unable to make a family of his own, but at the same time allows him to communicate with Doyle more directly than the boy's natural parents.

In Hughes' earlier teen movies, coming-of-age involved learning self-worth through sexual/romantic trials. Predictably, in *Driving Me Crazy*, coming of age takes the form of male bonding. There is a lot of physical violence in this relationship, as the pair test who can inflict and who can endure the most pain. After feigning his death and destroying Dutch's car, Doyle takes grim relish in claiming victory: "I beat you mentally, and then I beat you physically". He reckons without women, however. Those racy playing cards, and a lift with a pair of call girls (who rip them off), restore the balance between the men. The revelation that his father has cancelled their holiday to be with a lover, and Dutch's threat to leave his mother, persuade Doyle to concede defeat, even acknowledging Dutch as father-designate.

That a mother's relationship with her son is restored in her absence is sadly typical of a sexist strain in Hughes' work. Ultimately, his recipe for happy families is predicated on chauvinist assumptions and a certain amount of sado-masochism. The tensions in Hughes' films are more pronounced than has been credited, but for an auteur obsessed with coming-of-age, he shows little sign of maturity. *Driving Me Crazy* is his nineteenth produced screenplay since 1982.

**Tom Charity**



**Schism: Ed O'Neill, Ethan Randall**

**Certificate** PG  
**Distributor** Warner Bros  
**Production Company** Touchstone Pictures  
 In association with Touchwood Pacific  
 Partners I  
 Sandollar Productions  
**Executive Producers** Sandy Gallin  
 James Orr  
 Jim Cruickshank  
**Producers** Nancy Meyers  
 Carol Baum  
 Howard Rosenman  
**Co-producer** Cindy Williams  
**Associate Producer** Bruce A. Block  
**Production Co-ordinator** Angela Heald  
**Unit Production Manager** Paul Deason  
**Location Manager** Rick Dallago  
**Casting** Donna Isaacson  
 Extras:  
 Central Casting  
 Voice:  
 Barbara Harris  
**Assistant Directors** K.C. Colwell  
 Bruce Carter  
 Fernando Castroman  
**Screenplay** Frances Goodrich  
 Albert Hackett  
 Nancy Meyers  
 Charles Shyer  
 Based on the novel by Edward Streeter  
**Director of Photography** John Lindley  
**Colour** Technicolor  
**Camera Operators** Ray de la Motte  
 Additional:  
 Lawrence Karman  
**Opticals** Buena Vista  
 Visual Effects  
**Editor** Richard Marks  
**Production Designer** Sandy Veneziano  
**Art Director** Erin Cummins  
**Set Design** Martin "Geoff" Hubbard  
 Mark Poll  
 John Dexter  
**Set Decorator** Cynthia McCormac  
**Scenic Artist** Hank Giardina  
**Special Effects Co-ordinator** Allen Hall  
**Music** Alan Silvestri  
**Music Extracts** "Minuet and Badinerie" by Johann Sebastian Bach, performed by New Leipzig Bach Collegium Musicians  
**Orchestrations** William Ross  
**Music Producer** Steve Tyrell  
**Music Editor** Katherine Quittner  
**Music Consultant** Alan Mason  
**Songs** "My Girl" by William Robinson, Ronald White, performed by (1)The Temptations, (2)Steve Tyrell; "Nel Blu Dipinto Di Blu" by Domenico Modugno, Franco Migliacci; "Volare" by Domenico Modugno, Franco Migliacci, Mitchell Parish; "Chapel of Love" by Phil Spector,

Ellie Greenwich, Jeff Barry, performed by The Dixie Cups; "What's New Pussycat?" by Burt Bacharach, Hal David; "Perfect Match" by Steve Tyrell, Bob Mann; "(Today I Met) The Boy I'm Gonna Marry" by Phil Spector, Ellie Greenwich, Tony Powers, performed by Darlene Love; "Beyond the Sea" by Charles Trenet, Jack Lawrence; "Isn't It Romantic" by Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart; "I'm Your Man" by Steve Tyrell, Charles Shyer, performed by David Darling; "The Way You Look Tonight" by Jerome Kern, Dorothy Fields, performed by Steve Tyrell  
**Choreographer** Shirley Kirkes  
**Costume Design** Susan Becker  
**Costume Supervisor** Rosemarie Fall  
**Costumers** Women:  
 Linda-Lee Cucuzzo  
 Men:  
 Kirsten Everberg  
 Michael J. Long  
 Steve Martin:  
 Dennis Schoonderwoerd  
**Make-up Artists** Key:  
 Brad Wilder  
 Steve Martin:  
 Frank Griffin  
**Title Design** Pittman Hensley  
**Titles** Pacific Title  
**Supervising Sound Editor** Dennis Drummond  
**Sound Editors** Wayne Griffin  
 Michael J. Benavente  
**Supervising ADR Editor** Renee Tondelli  
**ADR Editors** Nicholas Vincent Korda  
 Susan Dudeck  
**Foley Editors** Sukey Fontelieu  
 Christine Danelski  
**Sound Recordists** C. Darin Knight  
 Music:  
 Dennis Sands  
 Bob Fernandez  
 Bruce Botnick  
**ADR Recordist** Doc Kane  
**Foley Recordist** Gary Hecker  
 Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recordists** Terry Porter  
 Mel Metcalfe  
 David J. Hudson  
 Denis Blackerby  
**Sound Effects Editors** Patrick Drummond  
 Kevin Barlia  
 Pamela Bentkowski  
**Foley Artists** Jeff Wilhoit  
 Chris Moriana  
**Loop Group** Jane Alden  
 Ruth Britt  
 J.D. Hall  
 Daamen Krall  
 David McCharen  
 Gary Schwartz  
 Steve Alterman  
 Greg Finley  
 Doris Hess  
 Joanna Lipari  
 David Randolph  
 Suzanne Stone  
**Basketball Adviser** Rob Ryder  
**Production Assistants** Keith Coene  
 Gregory Concors  
**Stunts** Debbie Evans  
 Charles Croughwell  
 Rock Walker  
**Steve Martin Stunt Double** Robert F. Jauregui  
**Animal Handlers** Alvin's Animal Rentals  
**Cast**  
**Steve Martin** George Banks  
**Diane Keaton** Nina Banks  
**Kimberly Williams** Annie Banks  
**Kieran Culkin** Matty Banks  
**George Newbern** Bryan MacKenzie  
**Martin Short** Franck Eggelhoffer  
**B.D. Wong** Howard Weinstein  
**Peter Michael Goetz** John MacKenzie  
**Kate McGregor Stewart** Joanna MacKenzie  
**Carmen Hayward** Grace  
**April Ortiz** Olivia  
**Mina Vasquez** Marta  
**Gibby Brand** David  
**Richard Portnow** Al, Tuxedo Salesman  
**Barbara Perry** Factory Worker  
**Martha Gehman** Andrea, Florist  
**Frank Kopyc** Dan, Field Engineer  
**David Pasquesi** Hanck, Caterer  
**Ira Heiden** Stock Boy  
**Thomas Wagner** Police Officer  
**Marissa Lefton** Annie, age 3  
**Sarah Rose Karr** Annie, age 7  
**Amy Young** Annie, age 12  
**Hallie Meyers-Shyer** Hallie Meyers-Shyer  
**Annie Meyers-Shyer** Flower Girls  
**Morgan Dox** Elisa Mandell  
**Christine Beliveau** Natasha Wieland  
**Natascha Wieland** Bridesmaids  
**Eric Kay** Scott Hogan  
**Scott Hogan** Peter Cooper  
**Peter Cooper** David Day  
**David Day** Ushers  
**Ed Williams** Reverend  
**Patricia Meyers** Irving Meyers  
**Irving Meyers** Guests at Reception  
**Mark Steen** Robert Bauer  
**Robert Bauer** Kevin Shaw  
**Kevin Shaw** Waiters  
**Bruce Block** Photographer  
**Peter Murnik** Patrolman  
**Chauncey Leopardi** Cameron  
**Steve Tyrell** Bandleader  
**Eugene Levy** Himself  
**Tom Irish** Ben Banks  
**9,456 feet**  
**105 minutes**

## USA 1991

### Director: Charles Shyer

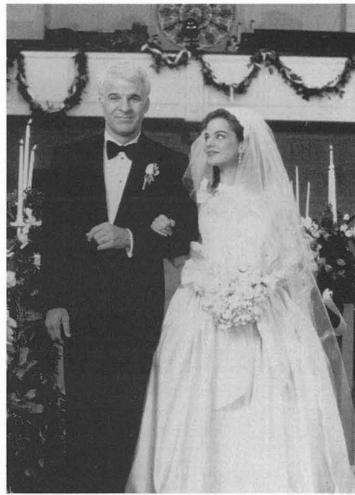
George Banks, a small-time businessman who makes trainer shoes, sits amidst the debris of a wedding and recollects the days leading up to the marriage of his only daughter, Annie... The Banks family live in the comfortable suburbs of San Marino, California. Their twenty-two-year-old daughter has just returned from a study trip in Rome and greets her parents and young brother with the news that she is engaged to Bryan MacKenzie, an American she met in Italy. Her mother Nina is thrilled, but George is less enthralled with the idea of losing his "little girl". He is even less happy when he meets Bryan, an eminently respectable suitor whose family live in Bel Air.

George and Nina start the impending marriage rituals with a visit to their prospective in-laws. The meeting goes well despite George's plunge into the swimming-pool after a furtive snoop around the opulent mansion. The preparations for the big day begin when Nina and Annie hire Franck, a foppish wedding co-ordinator with inflationary ideas. George, who had visions of a simple wedding reception barbecue, feels excluded and unhappy with the escalating cost.

On a trip to the supermarket, he becomes hysterical and is charged with shoplifting. Nina bails him out of jail on condition that he stop complaining about the wedding. The invitations are sent out and the presents start arriving. Then one day Annie announces that the wedding is cancelled - she has had a row with Bryan over his choice of a food blender as an anniversary gift for her. George takes Bryan out for a drink and patches up the relationship between the young lovers. The night before the ceremony, George plays one last game of basketball with his daughter.

The wedding itself is a huge success despite a freak snow storm. George is upset when he fails to catch up with his daughter to kiss her goodbye, but is consoled when she calls him later to thank him for all that he has done. George and Nina round the evening off with a quiet dance alone to their favourite record.

After toying with the vicissitudes of mother love, *Baby Boom* team Nancy Meyers and Charles Shyer turn their attention to the delicate relationship between a father on the verge of a mid-life crisis and his post-adolescent daughter. Their decision to revive the 1949 Minnelli/Goodrich and Hackett film immediately suggests a yearning for the idealised and uncomplicated family enshrined in American



**Steve Martin, Kimberly Williams**

culture in the post-war years. George Banks (here played by Steve Martin, who seems to have walked straight out of *Parenthood* into the role of the daffy but adorable pater familias) proudly claims that he is not "big on change", and we are further informed that his small home town hasn't altered in twenty-five years. Indeed, it is revealing that in the press notes Shyer and Meyers claim that they wanted their Banks house to be a homage to the original, "almost as if Spencer Tracy had sold the house to Steve Martin".

Meyers and Shyer are of course savvy enough to pepper their update with comments reflecting the changes that have taken place in the last twenty-five years - Nina runs her own business while Annie is training to be an architect and objects to the gift of the blender because it is so '1958'. But ultimately the film cleaves to an immutable family community headed by dad that endlessly convenes around such wholesome American pastimes as basketball and barbecues. It could be 1949, 1991, or for that matter 1958.

And in 1991, this swinging 60s Daddy is still traumatised by the realisation that he is "no longer the man in my little girl's life". Shots of George fixated by the sight of Bryan's hand on his daughter's knee and ribald slips of the tongue elaborate on the mild sexual rivalry between father and son-in-law-to-be. Indeed, much of the comedy revolves around helpless embarrassment, with Martin given plenty of scope for his now rather lame buffoonish routine (falling into swimming-pools, supermarket hysterics, etc). Strangely, this version does not opt for the full-tilt paranoia of the original's memorable nightmare sequence in which Spencer Tracy finds that the marriage ceremony has turned into an off-balance wobbly-wobbly walk up the aisle. But then such an absence is in keeping with the tone of this remake, which clings to dreams of familial bliss.

**Lizzie Francke**

# Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café

**Certificate** 12  
**Distributor** Rank  
**Production Companies** Fried Green Tomatoes Productions An Act III/Electric Shadow production  
**Executive Producers** Norman Lear Andrew Meyer  
**Producers** Jordan Kerner Jon Avnet  
**Co-producer** Ric Rondell  
**Associate Producers** Martin Huberty Lisa Lindstrom Deborah Love  
**Production Co-ordinator** Nancy King  
**Location Manager** Doug Whitley  
**Casting** David Rubin Associate: Debbie Zane Extras: Cynthia Stillwell  
**Assistant Directors** Deborah Love Jeff Raffner  
**Screenplay** Fannie Flagg Carol Sobieski Based on the novel by Fannie Flagg  
**Director of Photography** Geoffrey Simpson  
**Colour** DeLuxe  
**Camera Operators** Ken Ferris Additional: William Mills Alan Facemire  
**Steadicam Operator** Bob Ulland  
**Editor** Debbie Neil  
**Associate Editor** Sabrina Plisco-Morris  
**Production Designer** Barbara Ling  
**Art Director** Larry Fulton  
**Art Department Co-ordinator** Billie Speer  
**Set Design** Charlie Lagola  
**Set Decorator** Debra Schutti  
**Set Dresser** Karen Young  
**Special Effects** Larry Reid  
**Music** Thomas Newman  
**Songs** "My Blue Heaven" by Walter Donaldson, George Whiting, performed by Gene Austin and his Orchestra; "What Becomes of the Brokenhearted" by James Dean, Paul Riser, William Weatherspoon, performed by Paul Young; "Choo Choo Blues" performed by Trixie Smith; "Cherish" by Terry Kirkman, performed by Jodeci; "Cannon Ball" performed by Nora Lee King; "Barbecue Bess" by Bessie Jackson, performed by Patti La Belle; "Cool Down Yonder" by Ira Tucker, "A Charge to Keep I Have", "Didn't It Rain" performed by Marion Williams; "Danger Heartbreak Dead Ahead" by Clarence Paul, Ivy Jo Hunter, William Stevenson, performed by Taylor Dayne; "Rooster Blues" by Jerry West, performed by Peter

Wolf; "If I Can Help Somebody" by Alma Androzzo, performed by Aaron Hall; "I'll Remember You" by Bob Dylan, performed by Grayson Hugh  
**Orchestrations** Tom Pasatiere  
**Music Editor** Bill Bernstein  
**Costume Design** Elizabeth McBride  
**Wardrobe Supervisor** Cheryl Kilbourne-Kimpton  
**Costumers** Yvonne Cervantes Jane Myers  
**Make-up** Fern Buchner  
**Supervising Sound Editors** Allan Robert Murray Dialogue: Karen Spangenberg  
**Co-supervising Sound Editor** Walter Newman  
**Sound Editors** Karen Wilson Andre Bacha Connie Kazmer  
**ADR Editors** Devon Curry Jim Borgardt  
**Foley Editors** Butch Wolf Neil Burrow  
**Sound Recordists** Mary Ellis Music: John Vigran  
**Foley Recordist** Greg Curda Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recordists** John Reitz David Campbell Gregg Rudloff  
**Sound Effects Editors** Joseph A. Ippolito Marshal Winn  
**Foley Artists** Ken Dufva David Lee Fein  
**Production Assistants** Office: Canard Barnes Melanie Bell Jonathan Resnick Key Set/LA Office: Paul Erlich Location: Eric Smith Marc Pilinsky Marlon Dwight Art Department: Christian Bevington Set Dresser: Katherine Pinholster Sound: James Ellis Wardrobe: Melinda Eshelman Askia Jacob  
**Stunt Co-ordinator** Kerrie Cullen  
**Stunt Doubles** Steve Chambers Laura Dash Tracy Keehn Dashnow Dick Hancock Joy Hooper Mary Stuart Masterson: Kerrie Cullen Utility: M.J. Lord  
**Stand-ins** Mary Stuart Masterson: Utility: Shelby Hofer Mary Louise Parker: Kim Hardesty Stan Shaw: Tony Montgomery Kathy Bates/Utility: Letecia Stubbs Jessica Tandy: Letha Perkins Utility: Sidney White  
**Wranglers** Senia Phillips Horse: Butch Graziano

11,692 feet  
130 minutes

## USA 1991

**Director: Jon Avnet**

Visiting a cantankerous aunt at a convalescent home in Birmingham, Alabama, plump, bored housewife Evelyn Couch meets quirky octogenarian Ninny Threadgoode, who spins tales about her nearby home town, Whistle Stop...

In 1918, young Idgie Threadgoode's brother Buddy is killed by a train. Idgie grows into a fearless, good-natured teenager and builds a firm friendship with the God-fearing Ruth, who subsequently marries and moves to Georgia. Evelyn attends a women's encounter group hoping to revive her stale marriage, but her husband Ed continues to ignore her.

At the convalescent home, Ninny delves into memories of the 1930s. Ruth, now pregnant, is regularly abused by her husband, Frank Bennett; but Idgie, helped by Big George, son of the family seamstress Sipsey, takes her back to Whistle Stop, where they open a café popular with both blacks and whites. Frank, in town with fellow Klansmen, is prevented from taking Ruth's new baby, Buddy Jnr; when he tries again, he is hit on the head with a frying pan. Idgie ominously tells Ruth that Frank will not be returning. Soon, a Georgia lawman, Curtis Smoote, is sniffing around, trying to solve Frank's disappearance.

Emboldened by Idgie's independence and strength, Evelyn takes control of her life: she begins a low-cholesterol diet, institutes changes at home, and gets a job selling cosmetics. Ninny recalls how Frank's truck is eventually dredged from the river. Idgie and Big George are arrested for murder, but after an unexpected alibi from Reverend Scroggins, the case is dismissed. Ruth later dies of cancer.

When Ninny leaves the convalescent home, she finds Whistle Stop almost a ghost town and her house demolished; Evelyn, eager to repay her friendship, presses Ninny to move in with her and Ed. Ninny reveals the truth of Frank's disappearance: Sipsey wielded the fatal blow, then a barbecue disposed of the evidence. "All these people will live, because you'll remember", Ninny tells Evelyn, who now realises Ninny has been telling stories about herself - Idgie.

First Homer, then Borges, now Fannie Flagg: though *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, the second novel by this American television writer and stand-up comedienne, can hardly compare with the world's great tale-spinners for power or ingenuity. As scaffolding for a nostalgic, heart-warming trip to

the old South, however, the material serves a useful purpose. All the old suspects are rounded up: a feisty heroine called Idgie Threadgoode, who gambles and wears trousers with the best; a brutish husband who gets his melodramatic comeuppance; a gentle hobo, named Smokey Lonesome, popping in and out at the plot's convenience; a black community who only face trouble when the Ku Klux Klan briefly ride into town; a pastoral landscape of dusty lanes, mules, goats, passing trains, and small-town bustle.

Jon Avnet, directing his first cinema feature after a busy career in production, whisk us through the tragedies and joys with a quick, manipulative hand, artfully lingering on a posed chunk of landscape or the emotive shot of a small needy child, running alongside the train from which Good Samaritan Idgie dispenses food. Yet for all the director's legerdemain and the cast's lively spirit, gaps and hollows keep rupturing the surface. Idgie, for instance, passes from tomboy childhood to doting love for her friend Ruth without ever once giving the Whistle Stop males a thought: her sexuality, however, seems a forbidden subject. The tender aspects of Evelyn's situation, and her gradual blossoming under the influence of Ninny's tales, are never given time to take proper root. Instead, Avnet piles up quick bursts of broad comedy (Evelyn, for instance, flexing her liberated muscles at a supermarket parking lot), then rushes to luxuriate in the golden past.

Handsome mounted, engagingly performed, wrapped around with an ingratiating score by Thomas Newman, Avnet and Flagg's movie sits easily enough on the screen. But this is "Fried Green Tomatoes", not a three-course meal; and the emotions stirred lack the depth to make the film linger.

**Geoff Brown**



**With the best: Mary Stuart Masterson**

**Certificate** (Not yet issued)  
**Distributor** Palace Pictures  
**Production Company** Film Four International  
 A Vision production  
 For Limelight Productions  
 In association with British Screen/Windmill Lane Productions  
**Executive Producers** Simon Fields, Russ Russell, John Paul Chapple  
**Producer** Alison Owen-Allen  
**Associate Producer** David Brown  
**Production Co-ordinators** Fiona Traynor, Limelight, Sally Woodward Liverpool; Jeanne Lisscombe  
**Production Manager** Gemma Fallon  
**Location Managers** John McDonnell, Liverpool; Jud Cooper  
**Post-production Supervisor** John Downes  
**2nd Unit Director** Peter Diamond  
**Casting** Jane Frisby  
**Assistant Directors** Crispin Reece, Mick Rowland, Lisa Mulcahy  
**Screenplay** Peter Chelsom, Adrian Dunbar  
**Story** Peter Chelsom  
**Director of Photography** Sue Gibson  
 In colour  
**Camera Operators** Peter Versey  
 Additional: Des Whelan, Peter Dorney  
**Editor** Martin Walsh  
**Production Designer** Caroline Hanania  
**Art Director** Katharine Naylor  
**Scenic Artist** Lyn Whiteread  
**Special Effects** Maurice Foley  
**Music** John Altman

**Music Performed by** The John Altman Jazz Orchestra  
 Violin: Johnny Van Derrick  
 Guitar: John Etheridge  
 Accordion: Jack Emblow  
 Irish Band: Arty McGlynn  
 Nollaig Casey  
 Cathal Hayden  
 Keyboards: Craig Pruess  
 Nick Glennie-Smith  
 Simon Chamberlain  
 Additional Studio Musicians: Noel Eccles  
 Cello/Keyboards: Neil Martin  
 Villeann Pipes: Liam O'Flynn  
**Songs**  
 "Hear My Song" by Pepper, Klose, Luckesch; "Nancy with the Laughing Face" by Van Heusen, Silvers; "I'll Take You Home Again Cathleen" by Westendorf; "Blaze Away (We'll Make a Bonfire of Our Troubles" by Hozman, Kennedy; "Movin'" by Dunbar, Altman; "Count Your Blessings" by Temple, Morgan; "Goodbye" by Graham, Stolz; "Music for a Found Harmonium" by Jeffes; "Come Back to Sorrento" by De Curtis, Aveling  
**Costume Design** Lindy Hemming  
**Wardrobe** Rhona McGuirk  
**Make-up** Toni Delany  
**Titles/Opticals** The Optical Partnership  
**Sound Editors** Glenn Freemantle, Phil Bothomley  
**Foley Editor** Peter Holt  
**Sound Recordists** Peter Lindsay  
 Music: Geoff Young, Paul Hulme  
 Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recording** Nic LeMesserler, David Anderson  
 Chief: John Hayward  
**Stunt Co-ordinators** Peter Diamond, Mark Boyle  
**Stunts** Terry Cade, Dorothy Anne Ford, Steve Emerson  
**Animal Trainers** Cows: Cyril Eager, Tom Eager  
**Dog Handler** Mary Owen  
**Bird Handler** Jim Furlong

**9,450 feet**  
**105 minutes**

## Sleight: Ned Beatty



## United Kingdom 1991

### Director: Peter Chelsom

The early 80s. Micky O'Neill runs Heartly's, a Liverpool night-club. Receipts are down and the owners of the building, the Ryan family, threaten to fire him, but change their minds when they hear that Josef Locke will be the club's next star attraction. Locke, a popular Irish tenor in the 50s, took refuge back in Ireland twenty-five years ago after narrowly escaping the clutches of Chief of Police Jim Abbott on charges of tax evasion.

Locke is billed as "Mr X". Among the sell-out crowd are Micky's girlfriend, Nancy Doyle, and her mother Cathleen, elected Miss Dairy Queen 1958 by Locke, and his lover until he fled the country. Also present are the Ryans and Jim Abbott, who assures Micky that he knows Mr X is not the real Jo Locke. However, the act is persuasive, and the rest of the audience is convinced.

Micky tips off Mr X that Cathleen is an old flame, bringing the two of them together. Blinded by nostalgia, Cathleen spends the evening with Mr X, only to be rudely disillusioned when he tries to seduce her. Distracted, she breaks up Micky's celebration at the club and exposes the fraud. Everyone is outraged, none more so than Nancy, who storms off with her mother. The Ryans fire Micky on the spot and give him a black eye for good measure. They close down the club.

Dejected and penniless, Micky stows away to Ireland and persuades his old friend Fintan O'Donnell to help him find the real Jo Locke. They track him down in the countryside, where he lives as a farmer surrounded by loyal friends. Jo is suspicious and difficult to convince until Micky, turned upside down and held over the edge of a cliff, admits that he wants Jo to come back with him for Nancy's sake. When he hears the whole story, Jo softens and agrees to go back for Cathleen, who has remained his only true love.

Micky reopens the club for a free concert. Jo's old band assemble. Nancy forgives Micky (for the first time, he is able to tell her he loves her). The concert is a triumph, despite the presence of Jim Abbott. With the help of Mr X, Jo makes his escape and is reunited with his beloved Cathleen.

Enthusiastically received in the States and on the festival circuit, and with a Golden Globe nomination for Ned Beatty, this Film Four International production has been heralded as an impressive feature film débüt for co-writers Peter Chelsom (who also directs) and

Adrian Dunbar (who plays Micky). It is all the more disappointing, then, that far from making an innovative contribution to British cinema, *Hear My Song* relies for the most part on nostalgia, whimsy and sleight of hand.

Ostensibly, the film is set in Liverpool (and Ireland) in the 80s, twenty-five years after the popular singer Josef Locke fled Britain. A useful point of comparison is Alan Bleasdale's bleak screenplay for *No Surrender*, set in a night-club catering to the same Irish community, which is riven by inherited political, religious and personal divisions.

Community and the past have very different connotations in this film. It isn't just the acts at Heartly's – Franc Sinatra, Mr X, Josef Locke – who are in thrall to the good old days; so are the manager, Micky, with his hand-me-down show-biz lines ("See you later, alligator"), and the (exclusively white) audience, who lap it up. "Close your eyes... and you'll see whoever you want to", says one.

This nostalgic wish-fulfilment displaces any meaningful sense of the present. Chelsom's direction owes much to the zaniness of the 60s new wave, but his extras appear to have stepped out of the early 50s. So does David McCallum's policeman, with his raincoat, trilby and preternatural zeal. Not surprisingly, Chelsom's Ireland is a timeless, romantic country of bottomless wells, blarney and fairies.

Such whimsy runs counter to the moral impulse underlying the narrative: the redemption of a faker. The ambivalence surrounding Mr X – is he or isn't he the real Jo Locke? – is mirrored in Micky's relationship with Nancy: does he love her or not? It is only by finding the authentic Jo Locke that Micky can authenticate his own feelings. By turning his back on show business to farm the land, Locke is seen as more real than anybody else.

In contrast to William Hootkins' affected Mr X, Ned Beatty plays Locke as tough, hard-nosed, and potentially violent. But the film is too sentimental to leave it at that. Locke's 'reality' cannot be trusted because it is a retreat from his responsibilities to Cathleen (the tax man is afforded no such consideration). Locke the threatening avenger becomes Locke the romantic, indulging the fakers and rekindling the embers of long-lost love. So much for authenticity. The film finishes on an appropriately fraudulent note, with Ned Beatty singing "Count Your Blessings" (dubbed) and the 'magical' switch which leaves the police with Mr X while Locke escapes.

**Tom Charity**



**Laura de la Uz: of dreams...**

**Certificate**  
(Not yet issued)

**Distributor**  
Metro Pictures

**Production Company**  
ICAIC

**Producer**  
Ricardo Guila

**Assistant Director**  
Jorge Luis Sanchez

**Screenplay**

Maydo Royero

**Director of**

Photography

Julio Valdes

In colour

**Visual Effects**

**Photography**

Jorge Pucheu

**Animation**

**Photography**

Hector Borroto

**Camera Operator**

Julio Valdes

**Editor**

Jorge Abello

**Art Director**

Onelio Larralde

**Set Design**

Rolando Martinez

**Set Decorators**

Manolo Gonzalez

**Special Effects**

Frank Ernesto Perez

**Special Effects**

Benito Amaro

**Pyrotechnics**

Juan Varona

**Music**

Edesio Alejandro

**Songs**

"Los Dulces Dieciseis"

by J. Kosloff, Reid-T, Springer-vers, B. Molar, performed by Los Cinco Latinos;

"El Bodeguero"

by Richard Egues,

"Cuatro Vidas" by

Rafael Hernández,

performed by Orquesta

Aragón; "Hound Dog"

by D.R., performed

by Elvis Presley;

"Little Darling" by M.

Williams, performed

by The Diamonds with

the David Carroll

Orchestra

**Costume Design**  
Miriam Duenas

**Wardrobe**  
Caridad Sanchez

**Make-up**  
Violeta Cooper

**Titles**  
Truffo

**Sound Recordist**  
Carlos Dominguez

**Sound Re-recordist**  
Ricardo Istueta

**Production**

**Assistants**

Evelio Delgado

Magaly Gonzalez

**Subtitles**

ICAIC

**Cast**  
**Laura de la Uz**

Larita

**Raul Paz**

Victor

**Herminia Sanchez**

Josefa

**Caridad Hernandez**

Rosenda

**Enrique Molina**

Manolo

**Maria Isabel Diaz**

Flora

**Marta Del Rio**

Doctor Martinez

**Michelle Calvert**

Miss Amalia

**José Antonio Rodriguez**

Tomás

**Ana Gloria Buduen**

Leomila

**Yanara Moreno**

Marisabel

**Wendy Guerra**

Estela

**Carlos Manuel Barco**

Rafael

**Nestor Rivero**

Pedro

**Maria Elena Espinosa**

Hildeisa

**Diosdado Tarajano**

Cafeteria Owner

**Roberto Delgado**

Institute Director

**Pedro Regueiferos**

Bedel

**Manuel Angel**

Daranas

Dr Sanchez

**Armando Leon**

Butler

**Judith Sisto**

Cintia

**Magda Resik**

Diony

**Luis Enrique Pacheco**

Henry

**William Vega**

Roberto

**Susana Maria Perez**

Patricia

**Cirenica Moreira**

Zulma Nuñez

**Alejandro Arazoza**

Candidates

**Jorge Luis Marimon**

Jeweller

**Carmen Rivera**

Nun

**Carolina Nicola**

Alfredo Vistorre

**Eron Vega**

Harold Dominic

**Janet Caraballo**

Leanne Labrada

**Ileana Fernandez**

Ingrid Montaigne

**Lianet Perez**

Aloima Armas

Pupils

**Felix Rodriguez**

Old Fisherman

**Modesto Alanis**

Hemingway

**7,920 feet**

**88 minutes**

**Subtitles**

## Cuba 1990

### Director: Fernando Perez

● Batista's Cuba, 1956. Sixteen-year-old Larita lives with her mother and her aunt's family in a ramshackle house outside Havana. From their garden they can see Ernest Hemingway's white mansion. At home, she adorns her walls with pictures of Elvis Presley and Tony Curtis, while at school she excels in her English class. Larita is delighted when her teacher suggests that she enter the scholarship exams for university in America. She also happily dates a fellow class-mate Victor, the president of the student association.

On a visit to a bookshop, she is given a copy of Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, which she starts to read avidly, drawing parallels between the novel and her own life which she confides to her diary. At home, her family tease her about her academic aspirations – but it also becomes clear that they resent the fact that while they work she studies and contributes nothing to their meagre existence. The issue of finances is made more acute when Larita is sent home because she is not wearing the correct school uniform.

But she passes the first round of scholarship exams and is invited to a reception for the finalists, trying to make herself as presentable as possible with the help of her relatives' sewing skills. She tells Victor that she is on the scholarship short list, which makes him angry since politically America represents everything that he despises. That night Larita returns home to find that her uncle has been fired. Later, at the scholarship interview, it is implied that her chances of a place are severely hampered by the fact that she is illegitimate and does not have the right social connections.

In desperation, Larita decides to visit Hemingway to see if he will write a reference for her, but it turns out that he is away. Larita bitterly blames her mother for the fact that she is disadvantaged by poverty and illegitimacy. Meanwhile, at school, the student protests are becoming more frequent, culminating one afternoon in Victor's arrest. Later that year, Larita takes a job at a coffee bar where one evening the scholarship administrator walks by and recognises her, unaware of her profound disappointment about the award. But undaunted by the knowledge that she may never have the education and career of her dreams, Larita – like the old fisherman – is able to salvage some hope out of her despair.

● Set on the eve of the revolution that resulted in the foundation of one of the few Communist

countries still to exist, it is a dismal reflection on the current world order that *Hello, Hemingway* seems so quaintly old-fashioned. It is a modest and simple film that is often too concerned with its message and not enough with its own story – as though the references to the Hemingway novella were enough in themselves to carry the film. Interest is sustained by the sympathetic performance of Laura de la Uz as the downtrodden but determined young heroine whose coming of age coincides with that of her country.

Her impoverished life is bleakly if all too familiarly described through the retinue of women relatives fretting about the next meal as Larita polishes her shoes with milk, or the uncle reeling drunkenly home after being fired. Her relatives' ambivalent feelings about Larita's aspirations – to improve her lot so that she can in turn help them – are compassionately observed, though the situations fail to convince dramatically since there is no real tension within the ensemble of players. Hemingway's white mansion looms above the poverty-stricken household like the veritable ivory tower, though for Larita the gift of *The Old Man and the Sea* begins to infuse her life with new meaning. And as in any religious conversion, she has to be sustained by her faith even when her idol seems to have left the temple and abandoned her.

The film's final image of Larita by the sea, observing an old fisherman with his boat and nets, genuflects to the Hemingway novel while also invoking the Christian mythology that might lurk behind it. "You know nothing about fantasy", she tells her politico boyfriend, berating him for his ideological views. But the film's failing perhaps is that it cannot truly engage with Larita's imaginary world, serving up instead narrated chunks of Hemingway's prose and snippets of Larita's diary. If her personal struggle embraces an understanding of the need for economic change, but also attributes much to the power and hope of the imagination, then it doesn't seem to be particularly triumphant. This is a problem for a film that would cheerfully like to suggest that it is on Larita's vision that the future of Cuba will be built.

**Lizzie Francke**



...and books

## Certificate

18

## Distributor

Warner Bros

## Production Company

Warner Bros

A Silver Pictures

production

## Executive Producers

Shane Black

Barry Josephson

## Producers

Joel Silver

Michael Levy

## Co-producer

Steve Perry

## Associate Producer

Carmine Zozzora

## Production

Co-ordinator

Spencer Franklin

## Unit Production

Manager

Steve Perry

## Location Managers

Janice Polley

Robert Doyle

## Casting

Marion Dougherty

## Assistant Directors

James W. Skotchdopole

Donald J. Lee Jr

Sean Hobin

## Screenplay

Shane Black

## Story

Shane Black

Greg Hicks

## Director of

Photography

Ward Russell

Panavision

## Colour

Technicolor

## Camera Operators

Michael A. Genne

Craig Haagensen

## Editors

Stuart Baird

Mark Goldblatt

Mark Helfrich

Additional:

Michael Tronick

Chris Lebenzon

Conrad Buff

Christian Wagner

## Production Designer

Brian Morris

## Art Director

Christiaan Wagener

## Set Design

Eric Orbom

## Set Decorator

John Anderson

## Special Effects

Supervisor

Al Di Sarbo

## Special Effects

Foreman

Joe Ramsey

## Special Effects

Jan Aaris

James Camomile

Bill Aldridge

Andrew Sebok

Scott Thompson

Darrell D. Pritchett

Mike Meinardus

Robert Graham

Larry Shorts

Patrick Gordon

Main Title:

525 Post Production

## Music/Music Director

Michael Kamen

## Music Performed by

Acoustic Bass:

Charnett Moffett

French Horn:

Vince De Rosa

## Orchestrations

Jonathan Sacks

Albert Olson

Pat Russ

Bruce Babcock

Brad Warnaar

Philip Giffin

## Supervising Music

### Editor

Christopher S. Brooks

## Music Editor

Thomas Milano

## Songs

"Friday Night's a Great

Night for Football"

by Steve Dorff, John

Bettis, performed by

Bill Medley; "Moody

River" by Gary Bruce,

performed by Pat

Boone; "Get Off" by

Prince Rogers Nelson,

performed by Prince

& the New Power

Generation; "I Wanna

Be a Cowboy" by

## Certificate

18

## Distributor

Warner Bros

## Production Company

Warner Bros

A Silver Pictures

production

## Executive Producers

Shane Black

Barry Josephson

## Producers

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Supervisor

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## Special Effects

Foreman

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Mike Meinardus

Robert Graham

Larry Shorts

Patrick Gordon

Main Title:

525 Post Production

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Acoustic Bass:

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& the New Power

Generation; "I Wanna

Be a Cowboy" by

Shane Black

Barry Josephson

Production Company

Warner Bros

A Silver Pictures

production

## Executive Producers

Shane Black

Barry Josephson

Warner Bros

A Silver Pictures

production

## Producers

Joel Silver

Michael Levy

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## Associate Producer

Carmine Zozzora

## Production

Co-ordinator

Spencer Franklin

Unit Production

Manager

Steve Perry

## Location Managers

Janice Polley

Robert Doyle

## Casting

Marion Dougherty

## Assistant Directors

James W. Skotchdopole

Donald J. Lee Jr

Sean Hobin

## Screenplay

Shane Black

## Story

Shane Black

Greg Hicks

## Director of

Photography

Ward Russell

Panavision

## Colour

Technicolor

## Camera Operators

Michael A. Genne

Craig Haagensen

## Editors

Stuart Baird

Mark Goldblatt

Mark Helfrich

Additional:

Michael Tronick

Chris Lebenzon

Conrad Buff

Christian Wagner</



Forever summer: Reese Witherspoon, Jason London

**Certificate**

PG

**Distributor**

UIP

**Production Company**

Pathé Entertainment  
For MGM

**Executive Producers**

William S. Gilmore  
Shari Rhodes

**Producer**

Mark Rydell

**Associate Producer**

Bill Borden  
Jerry Grandey

**Unit Production Manager**

William M. Elvin

**Location Manager**

Mark Cottrell

**2nd Unit Director**

Bill Gordon

**Casting**

Shari Rhodes

Associate:

Beverlee Dean

Extras:

Tanya Sullivan

Alex Avelino

**Assistant Directors**

Jerry Brandey

Eric Wall

2nd Unit:

William M. Elvin

Grant Gilmore

**Screenplay**

Jenny Wingfield

**Director of Photography**

Freddie Francis

**Colour**

Eastman Colour

**2nd Unit Director of Photography**

Peter Norman

**Camera Operator**

Gordon Hayman

**Editor**

Trudy Ship

**Production Designer**

Gene Callahan

**Art Director**

Fredda Slavin

**Set Decorator**

Daryl Alder

**Special Effects Co-ordinator**

Neil Stockstill

**Special Effects**

LaVonne Doane

**Music**

James Newton

Howard

**Music Director**

Marty Paich

**Orchestrations**

Brad Dechter

**Music Co-ordinator**

Blake Lewin

**Music Supervisor**

Joachim H. Hansch

**Music Editor**

Ted Whitfield

**Songs**

"Loving You" by Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller;  
"That's Alright" by Arthur Crudup, performed by Elvis Presley; "Only You" by Ruck Ram, Ande Rand, performed by The Platters

**Costumes**

Peter Saldutti  
Dawni Saldutti

**Costumer**

Patsy A. Chaney

**Make-up**

Lynne Brooks

Key:

Christina Smith

**Title Design**

Balsmeyer & Everett

**Opticals**

John Alagna

The Effects House

**Supervising Sound Editor**

Anthony (Chick) Ciccolini III

**Sound Editors**

Thomas Alphonso Gulino

Richard Q. King

**Foley Editor**

Pam Demetrius

**Sound Recordists**

Peter Bentley

Foley:

George A. Lara

Music:

Shawn Murphy

Robert Schaper

Dolby stereo

**Sound Re-recordist**

Lee Dichter

**Foley**

Elisha Birnbaum

**Production Assistants**

Frankie Rogers

Marlene Canfield

Stacy Kay

Dan David DeBlieux

Steven R. McCormick

Lori Martin

Harold W. Melder

Leonard A. Williams

**Stunt Co-ordinators**

Joan Moio

Larry Holt

**Stunts**

Corey Eubanks

Allan Wyatt Jnr

Paula Marie Moody

Euryline Epper

Jeremy London

**USA 1991**

**Director: Robert Mulligan**

Louisiana, 1957. At the family farm near the small town of Robeline, fourteen year-old Dani Trant listens to Elvis records and pesters her seventeen-year-old sister Maureen for guidance in matters of love. When she was smaller, Dani could count on the Man in the Moon to listen to her, but more practical advice now seems desirable. Her parents, Matt and Abigail (who is pregnant), are too strict and high-principled to discuss such things, while Maureen, although ardently pursued by the odious Billy Sanders, has yet to fall in love and can only divulge a few basics. Dani is impatient to experience for herself the kind of passion suggested by the Elvis ballads.

Skinny-dipping one Sunday in a secluded creek, Dani is suddenly joined by Court Foster, newly arrived at the neighbouring farm. At seventeen, Court has become head of the family following the death of his father, and struggles to make the farm succeed for the sake of his mother and younger brothers. At first offended when he teases her, Dani forgives him during a trip into town to pick up some groceries, and quickly becomes infatuated. Finding frequent excuses to visit Court as he works on his tractor, she persuades him to join her one night for a moonlight swim. She makes advances, but Court pushes her away, and she runs disconsolately home through a thunderstorm to find that her mother has had an accident while looking for her.

When Matt gets back from the hospital, he gives Dani a thrashing, but the episode brings father and daughter closer together. Court, too, is contrite, and Dani manages to coax a kiss out of him. Then, for the first time, Court meets Maureen. Incredulous at the instant warmth between them, Dani tries to keep her boyfriend and her sister apart, but without success. Maureen checks that Court's affection for Dani is purely platonic, and they are soon inseparable. On the day that Abigail comes home with the new baby, Maureen and Court, to Dani's disgust, are out making love in the woods.

Then, in an accident with the tractor, Court is killed and the two sisters are left to grieve; bitterly, Dani blames Maureen for the entire tragedy. Maureen turns to Abigail for comfort, while Dani turns to Matt; her father's opinion, as usual, is sympathetic but forthright: hating her sister won't bring Court back. On a visit to Court's grave, Dani finds Maureen already there, weeping by his headstone, and the girls are tearfully reconciled.

Based on incidents recalled from childhood, Jenny Wingfield's screenplay offers a number of familiar attractions – the rustic setting, the summer idyll, the first love, the testing of parental ties, the sibling rivalry, the irretrievable losses – conveniently located in the sudden startling years of the late 1950s when popular music underwent its own intense growing pains.

The modest perspective that Wingfield wishes to add, apart from the observation (given excessive emphasis by her title) that the habit of talking to the Moon should be discarded after a certain age, is that afforded by the Trant family: as distinct from communities evoked by, say, William Saroyan or Harper Lee, the Trants cope with mundane crisis in their own honest and unassuming way and for this they are worth, suggests their chronicler, a moment of limelight. No stranger to remembered summers, Robert Mulligan films this one with a placid fluency, evoking a timeless middle-American oasis of pools and porches, woods and cornfields, a sheltered environment where sex is the great intruder, a threat to harmony, to happiness, and to life itself.

Reiterating the Mulligan ethic from earlier work (the revelations of sexual mismanagement, for example, in *Summer of '42* or *Clara's Heart*), *The Man in the Moon* links the clumsy death of its young suitor directly with his daydreams about passion. Elsewhere, Mulligan dutifully provides a welter of romantic images, including the classic moment of reunion as boy and girl rush to each other's arms. He even permits himself a thunderstorm as the Trant parents discover their daughter's night-time escapade, mother knocks herself out on a tree, and father reaches for the strap.

As counterbalance, the reconciliation between father and daughter is staged with an interesting delicacy, the camera standing well back from their embrace. With the possible exception of Atticus (in *To Kill a Mockingbird*), parents are usually an arm's-length experience in Mulligan's work; there is a constant tension in *The Man in the Moon* between the considered warmth of the performances by Sam Waterston and Tess Harper (as the older generation) and the director's determination to keep them at bay. The film's chief weakness is that its three juvenile leads lack the face for their task and either mug the life out of their lines or chill them with lack of animation. Although magnificently photographed by Freddie Francis, their story remains a disappointing return by Mulligan to the well-ploughed cliché.

**Philip Strick**

# Mobsters – The Evil Empire

Original US title: **Mobsters**

**Certificate** 18  
**Distributor** UIP  
**Production Company** Universal  
**Executive Producer** C. O. Erickson  
**Producer** Steve Roth  
**Production Co-ordinator** Heather A. Mills  
**Unit Production Manager** C. O. Erickson  
**Location Supervisor** Jim McCabe  
**Location Manager** Elaine S. Lipton  
**Casting** Bonnie Timmermann  
 Nancy Naylor  
 Associate: Jeff Block  
 Extras: Los Angeles Casting Express  
**Assistant Directors** Albert Shapiro  
 Albert Cho  
 Richard Oswald  
**Screenplay** Michael Mahern  
 Nicholas Kazan  
**Story** Michael Mahern  
**Director of Photography** Lajos Koltai  
**Colour** DeLuxe  
**Camera Operators** Randy Nolen  
 Nick Taylor  
 Pernell Tyrus  
 Angelo Pacifici  
**Steadicam Operator** Randy Nolen  
**Blue Screen Matte Painting** CFI/EFX  
**Editors** Scott Smith  
 Joe D'Augustine  
**Montage Editor** Allen Ferro  
**Production Designer** Richard Sylbert  
**Art Director** Peter Lansdown Smith  
**Set Designers** Richard Berger  
 Pete Kelly  
 Stacy I. Gelb  
**Set Decorator** George R. Nelson  
**Set Dressers** Steve Adams  
 Delbert Diener  
 David Price  
 John A. Scott III  
 Earl W. Shubin  
 Ronald Sica  
 Robert Sica  
**Production Illustrators** Primary: Mentor Huebner  
 Leon R. Harris  
**Special Effects Supervisor** Joe Lombardi  
**Special Effects** Roland Tantin  
 Paul Lombardi

**Music** Michael Small  
**Music Performed by** Ellis Island Orchestra  
 Klezmer Band:  
 Alan Deane  
 Barry Fisher  
 Boris Legun  
 Michael Rosen  
 Tanya Rust  
 Aaron Shifrin  
**Orchestrations** Jack Hayes  
 Christopher Dredick  
**Music Co-ordinator** Dennis Dreith  
**Music Editors** Kaller/Roush  
**Songs** "Bashful Baby" by Cliff Friend, Abner Silver; "Everybody Loves My Baby" by Jack Palmer, Spencer Williams; "Mesa Stomp" by Mary Lou Williams; "This Joint Is Jumpin'" by J. C. Johnson, Andy Razaf, Thomas Waller, performed by Carmen Twilley; "Freakish" by Jelly Roll Morton, piano solo performed by Mike Lang; "Dancer in Love" by Duke Ellington, piano solo performed by Mike Lang; "Yoshke" performed by Ellis Island; "Firen Di Mekhutohim Ameym" performed by Duo Pelet-Cuniot; "Odzidayne" performed by Ellis Island  
**Choreography** Toni Basil  
**Costume Design** Ellen Mirojnick  
 Associate: Marilyn Matthews  
**Costume**  
**Supervisors** Ruby K. Manis  
 Dan Moore  
**Set Costumers** Thomas L. Culver  
 Ivette Silberman  
 Brenda Cooper  
 Barry Kellogg  
 Cheryl Beasley  
 Blackwell  
 Leah P. Brown  
 Jessie J. Fields  
 Joseph R. Markham  
 Bernadette O'Brien  
 Anthony James  
 Scarano  
 Cheryl Perkins  
 Scarano  
**Make-up** Ronnie Specter  
 Marietta A. Carter  
**Make-up Effects**  
**Supervisor** Tony Gardner  
**Key Prosthetic Design** John Blake  
**Money & Blood Montages/ Title Design** Howard Anderson  
**Titles/Opticals** The Optical House  
**Supervising Sound Editors** Mike Dobie  
 Larry Mann  
**Sound Editors** Neil Burrow  
 Jeff Bushelman  
 Colin Mouat  
 Bruce Richardson  
 Charles E. Smith  
**Supervising ADR Editor** Uncle J. Kamen  
**ADR Editors** Petra Bach  
 Shelley Rae Hinton  
 Richard LeGrand Jnr

**Foley Editors** Duke Brown  
 William Jacobs  
 Steve Olson  
**Sound Recordists** Michael Eveje  
 Charlie Ajar  
**Music:** Armin Steiner  
 Dolby stereo  
**Supervising Sound Re-recording** Michael C. Casper  
**Sound Re-recording** Daniel Leahy  
 Thomas Gerard  
**Foley** Taj Soundworks  
 Kevin Bartnof  
 Ellen Heuer  
**Production Assistants** John W. Bergin  
**Costume:** Jay Floyd  
**Set Dressing:** Wendy Mickwell  
**Key Set:** Steve Cowie  
 Steven Buhai  
**Set:** Gregory Alpert  
 Susan J. Hellmann  
**Stunt Co-ordinator** Victor Paul  
**Stunts** Bob Arnold  
 Perry Barnardt  
 Ken Bates  
 Ray Bickel  
 Chino Binamo  
 Jeff Bornstein  
 Robert Breeze  
 Nick Brett  
 Hank Calia  
 Micke DeLuna  
 Chris Durand  
 Kenny Endoso  
 Jeannie Epper  
 Frank Ferrara  
 Cindy Folkerson  
 David Graves  
 Stefan Gudju  
 Bill Hart  
 Sonia Izzolena  
 Terry Jackson  
 Mike Johnson  
 Jimmy Jue  
 Maria Kelly  
 Steve Kelso  
 Kim Koscki  
 Paul Lane  
 David LeBell  
 Scott Leva  
 Gary Littlejohn  
 Bill Madden  
 Mike Marasco  
 Ben Marino  
 Denver Mattson  
 Bill McIntosh  
 Joyce McNeal  
 John Moio  
 Michael Papajohn  
 John Phillip  
 Denney Pierce  
 Walt Robles  
 George Robotham  
 Phil Romano  
 George Marshall Ruge  
 Jeff Smolek  
 Jerry Spicer  
 Erik Stabenau  
 Paul Stalone  
 Jerry Summers  
 Neil Summers  
 Stagg Summers  
 Martin Valinsky  
 Lee Waddell  
 Webster Whinery  
 Brian J. Williams  
 Dick Ziker  
**Animal Trainers** Dog:  
 Karen Dew  
 Wild Animals:  
 Paul Calabria

**Cast**  
**Christian Slater** Charlie "Lucky" Luciano  
**Patrick Dempsey** Meyer Lansky  
**Richard Grieco** Bugsy Siegel  
**Costas Mandylor** Frank Costello  
**F. Murray Abraham** Arnold Rothstein  
**Charles Picerni Jnr** Nick Dimitri  
**Gardeau** Bodyguards  
**Theresa Berquist** Kerry Brennan  
**Lada Budner** Janice Cronkhite  
**Melissa Dorf** Melissa Hurley  
**Shannon Maloney** Trish Pamish  
**Rachel Parker** Anna Villa  
 Dancers  
**10,897 feet**  
**121 minutes**  
**US running time:** 104 minutes

**USA 1991**  
**Director:** Michael Karbelnikoff

New York, 1917: Young Charlie Luciano witnesses the humiliation of his father and the murder of local gangster Don Masseria's nephew by the henchman of mob boss Don Faranzano. Charlie saves Meyer Lansky from a beating, and together with Benjamin Siegel and Frank Costello, they form a street gang. 1922: Approached by Arnold Rothstein, Charlie and his gang become whiskey bootleggers and make their first million dollars. But despite heavy pressure, they refuse to join forces with the 'families' of either Don Faranzano or Don Masseria.

Luciano takes up with night-club dancer Mara Motes. Squeezed by their rivals, Luciano's gang find themselves without a shipment of drink for New Year's Eve, so with Rothstein's help they hijack one of Don Faranzano's. Soon afterwards, Luciano's gang signs a deal with Don Masseria. Rothstein is murdered by "Mad Dog" Coll, a hired killer brought in by Faranzano. Against the wishes of his confederates, Luciano agrees to meet Faranzano alone, on neutral ground, Staten Island.

Despite threats and a savage beating, Luciano still refuses to join Faranzano's family and betray his friends. Realising he was set up by go-between Tommy Reina, Luciano kills him, then plots with his gang to start a street war between Faranzano and Masseria. Luciano's gang kill Masseria, and Faranzano is made "Boss of All Bosses", presiding over five families, including Luciano's.

Mad Dog Coll kills Mara Motes in Luciano's bed, but the police are bribed to say that the body is Luciano's. Luciano and his gang kill Coll and, in revenge for his father's humiliation fifteen years before, Luciano throws Faranzano through a window to his death. At a meeting of mob bosses from all over the country, Al Capone declares the formation of a new-style, egalitarian corporation run by a board of directors: Luciano is made head of the National Commission. A coda reveals that Luciano died of heart failure, aged sixty-five.



**Mobsters: once...**

## Reviews

**The Man in the Moon**  
**Mobsters – The Evil Empire**

A classic case of a Hollywood movie with a confused sense of audience demographics, *Mobsters – The Evil Empire* (formerly simply *Mobsters*) is a period gangster film with an identity crisis. Symptomatic of the problem is director Michael Karbelnikoff's assertion that "It was important that the young actors should transcend the period. I didn't want people to feel they are watching 1990s guys playing these roles". Yet the glossy publicity photos of hot young actors Christian Slater, Richard Grieco and Patrick Dempsey not only point up the obvious dissimilarity between them and the hoodlums they portray, they also position the film as a sleek package aimed at teenage audiences – *Young Tommy Guns*, perhaps.

On the other hand, the screenplay's complex plotting, the classy production values and the viciously realistic violence suggest an aspiration to something more adult and serious. This does, after all, purport to tell the true story of the historical development of organised crime between 1917 and 1931. Yet in attempting to present an epic vision of the transition from street-gang violence to boardroom respectability, the film bites off more than it can chew. More successful, in a limited way, are the relationships between the faintly sketched-in, almost archetypal characters: ruthless tactician Luciano, Meyer's 'man-behind-the-man', and sly backroom politician Frank Costello.

With its emphasis on friendship and trust as the only stable elements in a world of shifting allegiances, sell-outs and double-crosses, this element of the plot provides a useful framework for the 'rites-of-passage' clichés. The requirements of the genre provide ample opportunity for scenes of violence – cars raked by machine-gun fire, mob bosses rubbed out in restaurants, and demented gunmen cackling maniacally. Once the gunfire dies away, however, we are left with a teen gangster movie that is all dressed up with nothing to show.

**Nigel Floyd**



...and future (Christian Slater)

## The Prince of Tides

**Certificate** 15  
**Distributor** Columbia Tri-Star  
**Production Companies** Columbia A Barwood/Longfellow production  
**Executive Producers** Cis Corman James Roe  
**Producers** Barbra Streisand Andrew Karsch  
**Co-producer** Sheldon Schrager  
**Production Co-ordinators** South Carolina: Mary K. Perko New York: Rosemary Lombard Barwood: Kim Skalecki  
**Unit Production Managers** Sheldon Schrager Timothy M. Bourne  
**Location Manager** Charles Miller  
**Casting** Bonnie Finnegan Extras: Fincannon & Associates Tracy Fowler Voice: Barbara Harris  
**Assistant Directors** Thomas A. Reilly Debra Kent Robert Huberman  
**Screenplay** Pat Conroy Becky Johnston Based on the novel by Pat Conroy  
**Director of Photography** Stephen Goldblatt  
**Colour** Technicolor  
**Camera Operator** Ray J. de la Motte  
**Steadicam Operator** Ted Churchill  
**Video Playback** Michelle Mader  
**Editor** Don Zimmerman  
**Production Designer** Paul Sylbert  
**Art Director** W. Steven Graham  
**Set Designer** Chris Shriner  
**Set Decorators** Caryl Heller Arthur Howe Jnr Leslie Ann Pope  
**Lead Scenic Artist** Roland I. Brooks  
**Storyboard Artist** Brick Mason  
**Special Effects** Peter Knowlton  
**Music** James Newton Howard  
**Music Director** Marty Paich  
**Music Extracts** "Cavatina, Opus 13" by Howard Brockway; "Praeludium and Allegro" by Fritz Kreisler  
**Orchestrations** Brad Dechter

**Music Editor** Jim Weidman  
**Songs** "Dixie" by Pinchas Zukerman; "Fui Tu Caceria" by Margarita Pinillos, performed by Arabella; "Monkey" by and performed by George Michael; "Keep on Movin'" by Beresford Romeo, performed by Soul II Soul; "The Very Thought of You" by Ray Noble, performed by Red Garland; "Happy Birthday to You" by Mildred Hill, Patty Hill; "Honey Don't" by and performed by Carl Perkins; "That's What I Like 'bout the South" by Andy Razaf; "For All We Know" by Sam Lewis, J. Alfred Coats  
**Costume Design** Ruth Morley  
**Wardrobe** Men: Mark Burchard Women: Shirlee Strahm  
**Make-up** Isabel Harkins Key: Manlio Rocchetti  
**Titles** Cinema Research Corporation  
**Supervising Sound Editor** Kay Rose  
**Sound Editors** Gordon Davidson Teri E. Dorman James J. Isaacs Karen Spangenberg David W. Spence  
**ADR Editors** Linda Folk Victoria Sampson Mary Ruth Smith  
**Foley Editors** Solange Schwalbe Boisseau  
**Sound Recordists** Dennis Maitland Music: Shawn Murphy Dolby stereo  
**Sound Re-recording** Michael J. Kohut Carlos deLarios Shawn Murphy  
**Foley** Taj Soundworks  
**Shrimps** Advisers Sarah Paul Emmett Paul  
**Production Assistants** Set: Andrew Bernstein Justin Moritt Danielle Rigby Moshe Bardach  
**Stunt Co-ordinator** Frank Ferrara

11,849 feet  
132 minutes

## USA 1991

**Director: Barbra Streisand**

Tom Wingo remembers his blissful childhood on the South Carolina coast with his father Henry, a shrimper by trade, his older brother Luke, twin sister Savannah, and his beautiful and extraordinary mother, Lila. Wingo's present life, with his wife Sallie and three daughters, is breaking down due to Tom's inability to confront central issues in his life and marriage following the death of Luke two years previously. He learns from his mother of Savannah's attempted suicide in New York, where despite her success as a poet and author she has already experienced severe bouts of depression.

He reluctantly travels to New York, and though initially antagonistic to her psychiatrist, Dr Susan Lowenstein, agrees to participate in sessions to help his sister. Gradually, as he talks to Susan about his childhood, the disintegration of his parents' own marriage, and the beginnings of Savannah's strange behaviour, Tom is drawn into the therapeutic process. Calling Sallie, he learns that she is having an affair with a fellow doctor, and their relationship is strained when he returns home briefly for their youngest daughter's birthday.

Tom's relationship with Susan has meanwhile grown closer, and she reveals her own difficult family life with domineering husband Herbert Woodruff, a world-famous concert violinist, and troubled teenage son, Bernard, himself a budding violinist. Tom agrees to coach Bernard in football, and helps to bring him out of himself. Eventually, Tom reveals to Susan the buried family trauma: when he was thirteen, he, his mother and sister were raped by three escaped convicts. The event was then covered up, even from Tom's father. Susan is now able to approach Savannah's illness with more insight, and enables Tom to acknowledge his own guilty feelings of helplessness.

Susan invites Tom to dinner when her husband returns from a world tour. But Woodruff, who has despatched Bernard to a music summer school and remonstrated with his wife about allowing him to play sport, insults and humiliates Tom and Susan in front of distinguished dinner guests. Susan leaves with Tom and, acknowledging that they have fallen in love, they spend two idyllic weeks in Susan's country home. Back in New York, Tom receives a phone call from Sallie who has decided that it is him she really wants. Savannah is discharged from hospital and tells Tom that she is writing a new collection of poems dedicated to him. Tom spends a final

evening with Susan, and returns to South Carolina, his heart and mind unlocked, prepared to forgive his parents and start anew with Sallie.

*The Prince of Tides* is an old-fashioned melodrama, a major tearjerker which will have audiences searching frantically for their handkerchiefs from the opening scenes with Nick Nolte and Blythe Danner. The Wingo family are enviably good; three lovely daughters, a kind and generous wife at the end of her tether, and a numbed husband incapable of expressing what he feels. Nolte and, especially, the superb Danner convincingly portray a marriage that has lost its way, and although the flashback scenes to Wingo's childhood typically pick up on bad moments (the stuff of analysis) within the family history, Barbra Streisand directs with sufficient restraint to compel sympathy. Indeed there are touches of humour, as when Lila serves up dog food à la Worcester Sauce to her adamantly working-class husband after he complains about his coq au vin.

The rape scene and analytic dénouement, though key moments in the narrative, add little to an understanding of the characters, whose disturbed psyches have already been adequately explained in terms of the family romance. It's also a pity that the differences between the Streisand and Nolte characters have to be laboured so, leading to a certain amount of caricature and superficiality. For the simple point being made is that mature people can and do fall in love, helplessly and against their instincts and beliefs. But it's to Streisand's credit as director and actress that blame and recrimination are kept out of the scenario, and that Wingo's ultimate return to the family is the irresistible resolution.

One thread left dangling is Susan's future with Jeroen Krabbé's insufferable Woodruff, whose blow-dried appearance, as opposed to Wingo's manly scruffiness, marks him out as the villain. The doomed dinner party, when the Union/Confederate conflict is re-enacted in the confrontation between New York glitz (Krabbé at his slimiest) and drawling hick (Nolte) is overplayed, reducing the North/South, urban/rural distinction to cliché. There is a fair degree of sentimentality in *The Prince of Tides* (echoes of Streisand's *Yentl*), especially in the embarrassing work-out scenes in Central Park with Nolte and Jason Gould (Streisand's real-life son with ex-husband Elliott Gould). But in the end this is an effective, well-crafted, middle-of-the-road entertainment about the therapeutic power of love.

**Jill McGreal**

## Problem Child 2

<b>Certificate</b>	PG	performed by Iggy Pop; "Saved by Love" by and performed by Rik Emmett; "Whammer Jammer" by Juke Joint Jimmy, performed by J. Geils Band; "(Don't Make Me) Nervous" by Christopher Ewen, Anthony Kaczynski, John Rolski, Michael Smith, Perry Tell, performed by Figures on a Beach; "Walk Away" performed by Alanis; "Go for It" by Martin Page, Brian Fairweather, performed by Q-Feel; "Bad to the Bone" by and performed by George Thorogood; "Satch Boogie" by and performed by Joe Satriani
<b>Distributor</b>	UIP	
<b>Production Companies</b>	Universal An Imagine Films Entertainment production	
<b>Producer</b>	Robert Simonds	
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Kim Kurumada	
<b>Production Co-ordinator</b>	Paula Benson Himes	
<b>Uni Production Manager</b>	Kim Kurumada	
<b>Location Manager</b>	Marshall Peck	
<b>Post-production Supervisor</b>	Francine Fleishman	
<b>Casting</b>	Valerie McCaffey	
	Florida: Melvin Johnson & Associates	
	Extras: Tina M. Boergesson	
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	Mitchell Bock Polly Ann Mattson Chris Dellapena	
<b>Screenplay</b>	Scott Alexander Larry Karaszewski	
	Based on characters created by Scott Alexander, Larry Karaszewski	
<b>Director of Photography</b>		
	Peter Smokler	
<b>Colour</b>	DeLuxe	
<b>Camera Operator</b>	Frank Miller	
	Camera B: Herb Davis	
<b>Video Playback</b>	George Fuller	
<b>Editors</b>	Lois Freeman-Fox Robert P. Sepey	
	Additional: Mallory Gottlieb Gael Chandler	
<b>Production Designer</b>	Maria Caso	
<b>Art Director</b>	Allen Terry	
<b>Set Decorator</b>	Damon Medlen	
<b>On-set Dresser</b>	Jeffrey Taylor	
<b>Draughtsmen</b>	Ron Koch	
	Paul Roberts	
<b>Storyboard Artist</b>	Lily Duke	
<b>Artist/Sculptor</b>	Montgomery Triz	
<b>Special Effects</b>		
<b>Co-ordinator</b>	Richard Lee Jones	
<b>Special Effects</b>	Bruce E. Merlin	
	Jeffrey Ritz	
<b>Models</b>	Mark R. Bradley	
<b>Music</b>	David Kitay	
<b>Orchestrations</b>	Reg Powell	
	Steven Scott Smalley	
	Andrew Powell	
	Mark Waters	
<b>Music Supervisors</b>	Daniel Allan Carlin	
	Curtis Roush	
	Segue Music	
<b>Music Editor</b>	Laurie Higgins Tobias	
<b>Songs</b>	"Only the Strong Survive" by Bryan Adams, Jim Vallance, performed by Bryan Adams; "Get Ready" by William Robinson, performed by The Temptations; "Real Wild Child" by Johnny O'Keefe, Johnny Greenan, Dave Owens,	
<b>Cast</b>	<b>John Ritter</b>	
	Ben Healy	
	<b>Michael Oliver</b>	
	Junior Healy	
	<b>Jack Warden</b>	
	"Big" Ben Healy	
	<b>Lorraine Newman</b>	
	Lawanda Dumore	
	<b>Amy Yasbeck</b>	
	Annie Young	
	<b>Ivann Schwan</b>	
	Trixie Young	
	<b>Gilbert Gottfried</b>	
	Mr Peabody	
	<b>Paul Wilson</b>	
	Smith	
	<b>Alan Blumenfeld</b>	
	Aron Burger	
	<b>Charlene Tilton</b>	
	Debbie Claukinski	
	<b>James Tokan</b>	
	Mr Thorn	
	<b>Martha Quinn</b>	
	Emily	
	<b>Zach Grenier</b>	
	Voytek	
	<b>Eric Edwards</b>	
	Murph	
	<b>Krystal Mataras</b>	
	Dolly	
	<b>Tiffany Mataras</b>	
	Madison	
	<b>Dennis Redfield</b>	
	<b>Bill Warren</b>	
	Animal Control Men	
	<b>Kristina Simonds</b>	
	Rhoda	
	<b>Aaron Vaughan</b>	
	Scuzzy Boyfriend	
	<b>Denise Lecce</b>	
	Nancy Duer	
	Bridal Shower Ladies	
	<b>Tom Nowicki</b>	
	Ric Reitz	
	Health Officials	
	<b>Bill Cordell</b>	
	Lab Technician	
	<b>Hillary Matthews</b>	
	Upset Wife	
	<b>Bob Small</b>	
	Pathetic Defiant Man	
	<b>Danny Gura</b>	
	Freckled Boy on Ride	
	<b>Carla Kneeland</b>	
	Peabody's Date	
	<b>Tabatha Thomas</b>	
	Polly	
	<b>Paul Sutera</b>	
	Richard	
	<b>Buddy Stoccardo</b>	
	Crazy Dance DJ	
	<b>Jillian Amburgey</b>	
	"Hubba Hubba" Lady	
	<b>Adam Brock</b>	
	Neighbour Boy	
	<b>Christopher Oyen</b>	
	Goofy Waiter	
	<b>Danny Haneman</b>	
	Scummy Driver	
	<b>Operator</b>	
	<b>Brett Rice</b>	
	Maitre d'	
	<b>Shaun Padgett</b>	
	Mother	
	<b>Aimee Deshayes</b>	
	Precious Young Girl	
	<b>Tammy Boalo</b>	
	Sixth Grade Mother	
	<b>Danielle Meierhenry</b>	
	Sixth Grade Student	
	<b>Elaine Klimaszewski</b>	
	Diane Klimaszewski	
	Hot Tub Girls	
	<b>June Foray</b>	
	Voice of Puppet	
	<b>Carol French</b>	
	Horse Rider	
	<b>Carrell Myers</b>	
	Angle Harper	
	<b>Katie Prestwood</b>	
	Parents	
	<b>Laura O'Connell</b>	
	Girl with Bikini Top	
	<b>Tim Powell</b>	
	Man with Toupee	
	<b>Barclay</b>	
	Nippy	
	<b>"Buffalo" Bob Smith</b>	
	Father Flanagan	
	<b>8,155 feet</b>	
	<b>91 minutes</b>	

## USA 1991

### Director: Brian Levant

Having unleashed much havoc on the town of Cold River (see MFB No 683), the ever-mischiefous Junior and his surrogate father Ben Healy relocate to Mortville to make a new start. At school, Junior's recently transferred former principal moves him up to the sixth grade, where he arouses the wrath of the class bully by sellotaping him to the blackboard. The latter retaliates by dropping a TV satellite dish from the roof, but only the waiting Mr Healy is injured. Visiting the school sick bay, dad is treated by attractive medical assistant Annie Young, while Junior meets his match in equally brattish classmate Trixie, who attacks him for drawing a moustache on a photo of the nurse – her mother.

Having viciously sabotaged dad's first couple of dates, Junior is further aggrieved by the arrival of adopted grandfather, "Big" Ben Healy, a bankrupt entrepreneur escaping his creditors. After a trip to the fair which ends in mass public vomiting when he tampers with the controls on one of the rides, Junior agrees when his father begs him to restrain his nefarious impulses. Even so, the naughty youngster attempts to discourage the attentions of glamorous tycoon Lawanda Dumore by slipping cockroaches into the salad she prepares for an ill-fated family meal.

At the behest of his mercenary father, Ben announces his engagement to Lawanda, while Junior and Trixie are increasingly convinced that their respective parents are made for each other. Although a nocturnal trip to invoke the mysterious powers of a local landmark, the Navajo Love Rock, proves fruitless – as does Junior's plan to arrange Lawanda's disfigurement by plastic surgery after hospitalising her with suspected rabies – Trixie manages to halt the wedding ceremony by hijacking a mechanical excavator and depositing the allegedly magical boulder on top of the unfortunate bride. The children celebrate as Ben and Annie are finally united, while "Big" Ben rolls away the stone to rescue Lawanda.

In the current Hollywood climate of deepening financial (and creative) caution, the appearance of the modestly budgeted, easily marketed *Problem Child 2* is somewhat predictable. Unfortunately, as with so many sequels, the film-makers have traded on the viewer's familiarity with the concept and characters without doing anything new with them. Apparently aimed at the pre-pubescent market, the film's ►

◀ particular brand of broad slapstick is an all-too-obvious target for abuse. But while the puerile level of comedic invention may not be surprising, the regressive nature of many of the attitudes on display is rather more reprehensible.

Much of the humour is predicated on gross physical disgust, with vomit flooding through one of several set-pieces botched by director Brian Levant's leaden over-emphasis, urine mistakenly quaffed in another, and the sight gag in which a small dog is dwarfed by its own mound of steaming faeces needlessly repeated. Typical of the film's crude sexual values is the way in which the two dog-control men - who just happen to be transporting a dangerous rabies serum in their van - are pointlessly signalled as 'affected' gays. And having signalled Lawanda as the independent female character with the most forthright sexual identity by leering at her tight red dress and accompanying her initial entrance with blaring saxophones on the soundtrack, the film then heaps humiliation upon humiliation on her (literally, in the final scene).

The central emotional scenario presents Junior's problems in Freudian terms, in so far as he seeks a closer bond with his surrogate father and violently attacks the succession of threatening would-be surrogate mothers who come his way. Nevertheless, the notion that Annie Young's burden with the equally misbehaved Trixie makes her a perfect match for Ben allows the film to close with the familiar fusing of the nuclear family. That we never learn what happened to Ben's first spouse, Flo Healy, who at the end of the first film was locked inside a suitcase, is bizarrely underlined by the return of actress Amy Yasbeck as his new 'wife' Annie. In the circumstances, it is doubtful that this is intended to qualify our sense of a happy ending.

**Trevor Johnston**



Forging a bond -  
Michael Oliver

## Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country

<b>Certificate</b>	PG	<b>Special Visual Effects</b>	Industrial Light & Magic	<b>Matte Painting Effects</b>	Matte World	<b>Special Alien Make-up</b>	Edward French
<b>Distributor</b>	UIP	Producer:	Peter Takeuchi	Photographer:	Craig Barron	<b>Prosthetics</b>	Leonard Nimoy
<b>Production Company</b>	Paramount	Optical Photography		Matte Artist	Richard Snell Designs	<b>Titles</b>	Spock
<b>Executive Producer</b>	Leonard Nimoy	Supervisor:	Bradley Kuehn	Supervisor:	Michael Pangrazio	<b>Opticals</b>	DeForest Kelley
<b>Producers</b>	Ralph Winter	Computer Graphics		Project Management	David Oliver Pfeil	<b>Supervising Sound Editors</b>	Dr McCoy
<b>Co-producer</b>	Steven Charles Jaffe	Supervisor:	Jay Riddle	Executive:	Cinema Research	<b>Sound Editors</b>	James Doohan
<b>Associate Producer</b>	Marty Hornstein	Co-ordinator:	Jil-Sheres Bergin	Krystyna Demkowicz	Corporation	<b>Sound Editors</b>	Scotty
<b>Production Office Co-ordinator</b>	Brooke Breton	Art Directors:	William George	Motion Control	George Watters II	<b>Optical</b>	Walter Koenig
<b>Unit Production Manager</b>	Sheila Barnes	Editor:	Mark Moore	Camera:	F. Hudson Miller	<b>Sound Editors</b>	Nichelle Nichols
<b>Location Manager</b>	Marty Hornstein	Michael McGovern		Joel Hladcek	R. J. Palmer	<b>Sound Editors</b>	Uhuru
<b>2nd Unit Director</b>	Rhonda Baer	Motion Control		Camera Operator:	Frank Howard	<b>ADR Editors</b>	George Takei
<b>Casting</b>	Steven Charles Jaffe	Camera Operators:	Peter Daulton	Wade Childress	Jack Woods	<b>Foley Editors</b>	Captain Sulu
<b>Voice</b>	Mary Jo Slater	Computer Graphics	Patrick Sweeney	Model Maker:	Bruce E. Bell	<b>Tactical Displays</b>	Christian Slater
<b>Associates</b>	Barbara Harris	Animators:		Howie Weed	Suhail K. Kafity	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	"Excelsior" Crewman
<b>Extras</b>	Jan Glaser	Scott Anderson	Alex Seiden	Peter Kurian	Thomas Fucci	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Kim Cattrall
<b>Central Casting</b>	Wendy Engalla	Eric Armstrong		Animation:	Fred Stafford	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Lieutenant Valeris
<b>Chuck Maytum</b>	Extras:	John Burton		Al Magliocchetti	Bobbi Banks	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Mark Lenard
<b>Assistant Directors</b>	Douglas E. Wise	Richard Cohen		Kevin Kutchaver	<b>Additional Digital Compositing</b>	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Sarek
<b>Screenplay</b>	Katy E. Garretson	Wade Howie		Pacific Data Images	Pacific Data Images	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Grace Lee Whitney
<b>Story</b>	Randy Suhr	Joe Letteri		Optical Supervisor:	Optical Supervisor:	<b>ADR Editors</b>	"Excelsior"
<b>Leonard Nimoy</b>	2nd Unit:	Jim Mitchell		Les Dittert	Les Dittert	<b>Foley Editors</b>	Communications Officer
<b>Lawrence Konner</b>	Christopher T. Gerrity	Joe Pasquale		Animator:	Barb Meier	<b>Tactical Displays</b>	Brock Peters
<b>Mark Rosenthal</b>	Nicholas Meyer	Alex Seiden		Clint Cimino	Clint Cimino	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Admiral Cartwright
<b>Based on the television series</b>	Denny Martin Flinn	Computer Graphics		Barbara Cimino	Cliff Boule	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Leon Russom
<b>Star Trek</b> created by Gene Roddenberry	Story	Production Manager:	Gail Currey	Craig Newman	Mike Haney	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Kurtwood Smith
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Douglas E. Wise	Optical Camera		Nina Salerno	Gary Ritchie	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Federation President
<b>Hiro Narita</b>	Katy E. Garretson	Operators:		Randy Weeks	Music:	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Christopher Plummer
<b>Colour</b>	Randy Suhr	Jon Alexander		Katie O'Hara	Armin Steiner	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Chang
<b>Technicolor</b>	2nd Unit:	Donald Clark		24 Frame	Dolby stereo	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Rosana DeSoto
<b>2nd Unit Director of Photography</b>	Christopher T. Gerrity	Jeffrey Doran		Video Displays	Consultant:	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Azetur
<b>Aerial Photography</b>	Nicholas Meyer	Selwyn Eddy III		Video Image	Thom Ehle	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	David Warner
<b>Clinton O. Johnson</b>	Denny Martin Flinn	Keith Johnson		Janet Earl	Foley:	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Chancellor Gorkon
<b>Camera Operator</b>	Kristin R. Glover	Patrick Repola		Aaron Katz	Greg Curda	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	John Schuck
<b>Visual Effects</b>	Supervisor:	Kenneth Smith		David Katz	ADR:	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Klingon Ambassador
<b>Scott Farrat</b>	Scott Farrat	Optical Line Up:		Pete Martinez	Bob Baron	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Michael Dorn
<b>Editor:</b>	Editor:	Margaret Hunter		Monte Swann	Jeffrey J. Haboush	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Klingon Defence
<b>Thomas R. Bryant</b>	Thomas R. Bryant	David Karpman		Jim Unsinn	Michael Herbick	<b>Sound Recordists</b>	Attorney
		Jennifer Lee		Video Co-ordinator:	Greg P. Russell	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Paul Roselli
		Thomas Rosseter		Jeffrey Harstedt	Alan Howarth	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Kerla
		John D. Whisman		<b>Editors</b>	John Paul Fasal	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Robert Easton
		Optical Scanning		Ronald Roose	<b>Foley</b>	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Klingon Judge
		Co-ordinator:		Film:	Greg Curda	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Clifford Shegog
		Lisa Vaughn		William Hoy	ADR:	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Klingon Officer
		Camera Supervisor:		<b>Production Designer</b>	Bob Baron	<b>Sound Effects</b>	W. Morgan
		Bruce Walters		Herman Zimmerman	Jeffrey J. Haboush	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Sheppard
		Camera Operators:		<b>Art Director</b>	Michael Herbick	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Klingon Commander
		Charlie Clavadetscher		Nilo Rodis-Jamero	Greg P. Russell	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Brett Porter
		John Graves		<b>Set Designers</b>	Roland Armstorf	<b>Sound Effects</b>	General Stex
		Steven Reding		Eugene C. Nollman	R. Harrison Gibbs	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Jeremy Roberts
		Eric Swenson		Alan S. Kaye	Joe Lotito	<b>Sound Effects</b>	"Excelsior" Officer
		Rotoscope Supervisor:		Louise Nielsen	Russell Alan Steele	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Michael Bofshever
		Thomas Bertino		Ron Wilkerson	Art Department:	<b>Sound Effects</b>	"Excelsior" Engineer
		Rotoscope Artists:		<b>Set Decorator</b>	Buffie Friedrich	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Angelo Taffe
		Kathleen Beeler		Mickey S. Michaels	Aaron M. Albucher	<b>Sound Effects</b>	"Excelsior" Navigator
		Rebecca Petrulli		<b>Special Effects</b>	John Downer	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Boris Lee Krutonog
		Heskes		<b>Supervisor</b>	Stunt Co-ordinator	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Helmsman Lojur
		Sandy Houston		Terry D. Frazee	Donald R. Pike	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Iman
		Terry Molatore		<b>Models</b>	<b>Stunts</b>	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Martia
		Jack Mongovan		Jackal Mastiff:	Ed Anders	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Tom Morga
		Ellen Mueller		Greg Cannom	Jeff Bornstein	<b>Sound Effects</b>	The Brute
		Carolyn Rendu		Cliff Eidelberg	Eddie Braun	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Todd Bryant
		Animation		Theme from Star Trek	Charlie Brewer	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Klingon Translator
		Supervisor:		TV series by	Hal Burton	<b>Sound Effects</b>	John Bloom
		Wes Ford Takahashi		Alexander Courage	Gary Baxley	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Behemoth Alien
		Animators:		Gordon Baker	Brett Davidson	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Jim Boeke
		Christopher Green		Christopher Green	B. J. Davis	<b>Sound Effects</b>	First Klingon General
		Peter Crosman		Peter McKenzie	Dorothy Ching-Davis	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Carlos Cestero
		Animation Effects		Additional:	Maria Doest	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Munitions Man
		Co-ordinator:		William Kidd	Joe Farago	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Edward Clements
		Shari Malyn		<b>Music Editor</b>	Sandy Free	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Young Crewman
		Model Shop		Bunny Andrews	Joy Hooper	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Katie Jane Johnston
		Supervisor:		<b>Costume Design</b>	Tom Huff	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Martia as a Child
		Lawrence Tan		Dodie Shepard	Jeff Imada	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Douglas Engalla
		Modelmakers:		Elaine Maser	Jeffrey S. Jensen	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Prisoner at Rura
		Jon Foreman		Greg Hall	Robert King	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Penthe
		Brian Gernand		Robert M. Moore	Scott Leva	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Matthias Hues
		Jon Goodson Jnr		Adrienne Childers	Alan Marcus	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Second Klingon General
		Jack Haye		Key:	Cole McKay	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Darryl Heniques
		Richard Miller		Christine Heinz	Eric Norris	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Nanclus
		Alan Peterson		Joseph R. Markham	Noon Orsatti	<b>Sound Effects</b>	David Orange
		Susan Ross		Make-up	Deeana Pampena	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Sleepy Klingon
		Kim Smith		Gilbert A. Mosko	Gary T. Pike	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Judy Levitt
		Eben Stromquist		Photographer:	Donald B. Pulford	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Military Alien
		Paul Theren		Supervisor:	Joycelyn Robinson	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Shakti
		Wim Van Thillo		Supervisor:	Danny Rogers	<b>Sound Effects</b>	ADC
		Charles Wiley		Supervisor:	Don Ruffin	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Michael Snyder
		Production Assistants:		Supervisor:	Spike Silver	<b>Sound Effects</b>	Crewman Dax
		Carol Lee Griswold		Supervisor:	Erik Stabenau	<b>Sound Effects</b>	9,907 feet
		Alia Almeida Agha		Supervisor:		<b>Sound Effects</b>	110 minutes
		Nancy Luckoff		Supervisor:		<b>Sound Effects</b>	
		Tina Matthies		Supervisor:		<b>Sound Effects</b>	

Forging a bond -  
Michael Oliver

USA 1991

**Director: Nicholas Meyer**

Stardate 9521.6. After years of cold war, Chancellor Gorkon of the Klingon Empire has offered to forge a peace with the Federation, and the starship "Enterprise" is sent to escort him to the negotiating table. Captain James T. Kirk still hates Klingons, whom he blames for the death of his son, and the first contact between the officers of the "Enterprise" and Gorkon's entourage - including War Chief Chang and Gorkon's daughter Azetbur - ends in a squabble. Later, the "Enterprise" appears to fire on Gorkon's ship, and Federation soldiers beam aboard and assassinate the Chancellor.

Azetbur replaces her father and only agrees to continue talks if Kirk and Dr McCoy are tried for the murders in a Klingon court. Prosecuted by Chang and convicted, Kirk and McCoy are condemned to life imprisonment on the colony of Rura Penthe. Mr Spock takes command of the "Enterprise" and, with his Vulcan protégé Valeris, conducts a search for evidence to expose the real killers, who definitely did come from their ship, although he theorises that a Klingon battleship with powers of invisibility fired the first shots at Gorkon.

Kirk and McCoy are befriended by alien shapeshifter Martia, who helps them escape to an area from which they can be beamed aboard the "Enterprise". Against orders, the starship has been proceeding to Rura Penthe for a rescue mission. Martia has actually been paid to lure Kirk and McCoy into a trap so they can be killed, but Spock rescues his comrades. Spock exposes Valeris as a traitor, in league with Chang and warmongers in the Federation out to sabotage the peace talks.

The "Enterprise" travels to the site of the talks, beats Chang's invisible ship in battle, and Kirk beams down to prevent an attempt to assassinate the peace-minded President of the Federation. Kirk and his friends retire, and the "Enterprise" is summoned to Earth to be refitted and turned over to a new generation of spacefarers.

*Star Trek VI* has the job simultaneously of rescuing the series from the disaster of William Shatner's *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* and of providing 'something special' for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the original TV series (and, as it happens, in honour of the death of creator Gene Roddenberry). Director Nicholas Meyer, returning from *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan*, and writer-producer Leonard Nimoy, helmsman



**The timeless generation**

for *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* and *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, have opted to link in the bluntest possible way the world of the Federation with the America on which it is so blatantly patterned, even to the extent of having the President sound like George Bush. With its own Gorbachev, Siberia, hard-liners, show trials, Chernobyl and glasnost, the Klingon Empire - vaguely Mongolian on its original outing - has been reconfigured into an equivalent of the disintegrating Soviet Union.

However, even given the heavy-handedness of the parallel, *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country* is a lumbering and self-indulgent picture, dragged down at every turn by the weight of twenty-five years of illogical mediocrity, as if the series' notional science-fiction aspects preempted the need for characters, stories or a universe that made any dramatic sense. A prime example is the invisible Klingon ship, whose existence is deduced with no evidence, and whose invincibility comes complete with a handy flaw that enables Kirk to blast it out of space for the finale.

There is a noble attempt to wind everything down with an ending that suggests a handing-over of the baton to the crew of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* - with Michael Dorn appearing as a Klingon ancestor of the character he plays

on the current show. But the universe of the *Star Trek* series has so firmly established its own rules that it is inconceivable that anyone, no matter how important in plot terms, could be valued more highly than the seven leads of the original *Star Trek* (as witness Christian Slater, in an uncredited bit-part, playing second fiddle to George Takei's Captain Sulu). In the tradition of the series is the redundant mystery plot: Valeris must be the traitor simply because Kim Cattrall is the only newcomer on the bridge. It is literally unthinkable, even though it might be dramatically far more interesting, that Scotty or Chekov turn out to be the die-hard warmonger in the Federation camp.

Typical of Roddenberry is the autodidact's reverence for superficial erudition, as demonstrated by the entire cast's fondness for throwing out-of-context Shakespeare quotes at each other during verbal or actual battles. Ultimately, the most significant turn of the endless verbiage that serves as a script is the confusion about the very sub-title, "the undiscovered country". While all the characters confidently assert that Shakespeare was talking about the future, what Hamlet was actually referring to was death.

**Kim Newman**

## Strip Jack Naked: *Nighthawks II*

**Certificate**  
(Not yet issued)  
**Distributor**  
BFI  
**Production Company**  
BFI  
In association with Channel Four Television  
**Executive Producers**  
Kate Ogborn  
Andy Powell  
**Producers**  
Ron Peck  
Paul Hallam  
**Screenplay**  
Ron Peck  
Paul Hallam  
**Directors of Photography**  
Ron Peck  
Christopher Hughes  
Part in colour  
**Editors**  
Ron Peck  
Adrian James Carbutt  
**Music**  
Adrian James Carbutt  
**Film Extracts**  
*Its Ugly Head* (1974)  
*Nighthawks* (pilot and out-takes; 1978)

**With**  
John Brown  
John Diamon  
Nick Bolton  
*Its Ugly Head*:  
Walter McMonagle  
Judy Liebert  
Michael Menaugh  
*Nighthawks*:  
Ken Robertson  
Jon Angel  
Alex Billeter  
Keith Cavanagh  
Colm Clifford  
Frank Dilbert  
Maureen Dolan  
Terry Edwards  
Allan Ellaway  
Bernard Hanson  
Piers Headley  
Chris Heaume  
Frank Honoré<sup>1</sup>  
Rachel Nicholas James  
Derek Jarman  
Richard Krupp  
Leo Madigan  
Robert Merrick  
Clive Peters  
Jean-Marc Proveur  
Allan Stafford  
Stuart Turton  
Paul Walentiewicz

**Originated on video**

**3,276 feet**  
**91 minutes**  
**(16 mm)**

## Reviews

**Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country**  
**Strip Jack Naked:**  
**Nighthawks II**

## United Kingdom 1991

### Director: Ron Peck

In *Strip Jack Naked*, Ron Peck reassesses his life, work and times, largely through a reworking of footage and out-takes from his original *Nighthawks* (1978), accompanied by an excellent voice-over from Peck himself. The new film's origins lie partly in Peck's guilt over cutting out large sections of *Nighthawks*, some of which was footage of a friend, Colm Clifford, who died recently (and unknown to Peck) of AIDS. This develops into an account of the making of *Nighthawks*, and of Peck's personal history, particularly his own 'coming out' which coincided with the publicity surrounding the film. Peck also describes the impact of various political and social phenomena: the early British and American militant gay movements of the 60s and 70s, the growth of the 60s counter-culture and, of course, the emergence of AIDS.

Peck uses the central figure of *Nighthawks* – a young teacher who gradually and painfully comes to terms with his sexuality and 'comes out' through the club circuit – to depict his own life at the time. By making his fictional character in a way the 'author', and turning himself into a spectator, Peck brings a fascinating slant to the material. Criticising his work as he goes, describing the struggle to make his films, affectionately remembering friends lost or dead (more often the latter), he takes us through the early years of the gay movement, when "the personal is political" became an influential if misleading slogan.

Part of Peck's intention is to stress that it is undesirable and impossible now to treat gays as a monolithic group which one can address as if difference does not exist. Sexuality can only bind to a certain point without becoming in turn another jailer, another form of repression, even if self-imposed.

A comparison with Derek Jarman, a contemporary and fellow gay filmmaker, is perhaps illuminating. The state of homosexuality for Jarman is a Romantic and often tragic one, with connections to Shakespeare, Caravaggio, Marlowe and St Sebastian. In contrast, Peck's work is intimate, naturalistic, humorous and contemporary. Even though *Strip Jack Naked* conjures dream-like and erotic states through the use of close-up and slow motion, we are always brought back to the harsh reality of the pick-up, of social ostracism, of the business of getting by. *Strip Jack Naked* is one of the best gay films for some time; it is also – just when we thought we had learned not to be afraid of these images – disturbing.

**Michael O'Pray**

## True Love



Not a private matter: Annabella Sciorra, Ron Eldard

### Certificate

15

### Distributor

Oasis

### Production Company

United Artists

### Producers

Richard Guay

Shelley Hous

### Associate Producer

Jeffrey Kimball

### Production Office

### Co-ordinator

Veronica Brady

### Production Manager

Steven Stoke

### Location Manager

Jane Harrison

### Casting

Breanna Benjamin

### Extras

Judith Leire

### Assistant Directors

Richard Guay

John Miller Tobin

Eddie Collyns

### Screenplay

Nancy Savoca

Richard Guay

### Director of Photography

Lisa Rinzler

### Colour

DuArt

### 2nd Unit Photography

John Hazzard

Jeff Preiss

Susan Starr

Jeff Weyman

### Steadicam Operator

Joe DeSalvo

### Editor

John Tintori

### Production Designer

Lester W. Cohen

### Art Director

Pamela Woodbridge

### Set Decorator

Jessica Lanier

### Set Dressers

Phillip Schneider

Sermín Kardestuncer

### Music/Songs

"Whole Wide World"

by Elliot Wolff, Arnie Roman, performed by A'me Lorain;

"Cupid" by Sam Cooke, performed by Graham Parker;

"Opposites Attract" by Stephen Hague,

Steve Lironi, performed by Jimmy Helms;

"Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me"

by Harry Noble Jnr, performed by Mel Carter;

"How 'bout Us" by Dana Walden,

performed by Betty Wright, Grayson Hugh;

"Stop Twisting My Arm" by David Sholl, performed by Barrence Whitfield and the Savages;

"Some Came

Running" by Jim Capaldi, Peter Vale, Miles Waters, performed by Jim Capaldi; "When You Gonna Give Me Your Love" by Berry Cosgrove, Kevin Clark, Barry D-Hollamby, Andy Stennett, Noel D-Hollamby, performed by Berry Cosgrove; "Heartbeat" by Kenton Nix, performed by Taana Gardner; "Right by Your Side" by Annie Lennox, Dave Stewart, performed by Eurythmics

### Music Co-ordinator

Larry Kay

### Music Supervisor

Jeffrey Kimball

### Costume Design

Deborah Anderko

### Wardrobe

Eugene Lauze

### Supervisor

Ira Manhoff

### Key Make-up

Chris Bingham

### Title Design

Mary Cybulski

### Titles/Opticals

EFX Unlimited

### Sound Editors

Tim Squires

### Dialogue

Robert Degus

### ADR Editor

Ira Manhoff

### Sound Recordist

Matthew Price

### Dolby stereo

### Sound Re-recordist

Peter Waggoner

### Production Assistants

Robert I. Smith Jnr

Christina Delfico

Joanne Figueroa

Donna Hooper

Daniel Rosen

### Cast

### Annabella Sciorra

Donna

### Ron Eldard

Michael

### Aida Turturro

Grace

### Roger Rignack

Dom

### Star Jasper

J.C.

### Michael J. Wolfe

Brian

### Kelly Cinnante

Yvonne

### Rick Shapiro

Kevin

### Suzanne Costallos

Fran

### Vinny Pastore

Angelo

### Marianne Leone

Carmella

### Marie Michaels

Chickie

### Anna Vergani

Grandma

### John Nacco

Benny

### Ann Tucker

Barbara

### Nanette Werness

Josie

### George Russo

Tom

### Jennifer Occhino

Jennifer

### Bernard Jaffe

Carmine

### Frankie Pisacano

Baby

### Steven Randazzo

Ernie

### Mary Portser

Trudy

### Donald Berman

Maître d'

### John Salemmo

Johnny

### Saverio Guerra

Frankie

### Jack DiGiorgio

Photographer

### Dale Carman

Father Frank

### Nicky Sciorra

### Nick Medile

### Ralph Adinola

### Mark Cucarese

### Eric Lipsenthal

### Thomas La Rocca

The Main Event

### Charmaine Castelli

Kelly

### Filomena Dobbins

Lynn

### Joseph Giardino

Nicky

### Christopher Shaw

Furniture Salesman

### Judy Prianti

Waitress

### David Stepin

Deli Customers

### William Bastiani

Joe Chicken

### Ed Pascal

Pete Cigars

### Tracy Lundell

Photographer's

### Assistant

### Barbara Tuffarelli

Woman in Bathroom

### Daniel Tuffarelli

Boy in Bathroom

### Al Juliano

Stripper

### Ray Tintori

Ring Bearer

### Angela Walsh

Young Woman

### Bobby Guay

Boy on Big Wheel

### 9,030 feet

### 100 minutes

## USA 1989

### Director: Nancy Savoca

Donna and Michael have grown up together in a working-class Bronx neighbourhood. Childhood sweethearts, they have been engaged for two years. They each live with their families, who offer vociferous advice on their impending marriage. They arrange an evening alone together babysitting for Michael's sister, but much to Donna's annoyance, Michael's friends invite him to go out for a drink instead. The following day, Michael and Donna meet to make the final decisions about the reception, the colour of the men's tuxedos, and gifts for the bridesmaids, but they cannot agree on anything. Later, Michael consents to a meeting with Donna after his bachelor party. Michael and his friends go on a drinking spree while Donna takes her friends to the apartment where she and Michael will be living.

When she doesn't hear from Michael as expected, Donna and her friends go to a local club. Michael and his entourage polish off the evening with a trip to Atlantic City. The following day, Michael suffers from a painful hangover, infuriating Donna, who wants him to see to the last-minute wedding preparations. Donna's sister and friends rally round. When Donna and Michael finally meet up they have their first fight. Later, the young couple make up, and Donna asks Michael to become her 'blood brother'.

That night – the eve of the wedding – Donna asks Michael round to her house, where they secretly make love. The following day the marriage ceremony goes smoothly. But at the reception, Michael announces to Donna that he would like to go out drinking with his friends. Donna is furious that he wants to leave her alone on their wedding night and storms off to the bathroom, where she is comforted by her friends. Later, Michael talks to her; after an argument, they return to the reception for the wedding photographs.

"What is it – a soap opera here?" exclaims one of *True Love's* characters about Michael and Donna's trials and tribulations. This confident directorial début from Nancy Savoca echoes the preoccupation with class and ethnicity of many New York independent directors, but those mean streets certainly have been washed down with soap.

*True Love* is a gently critical portrayal of the claustrophobic Italian-American community with its endlessly extending families whose members all seem to have some vested interest in the young couple's

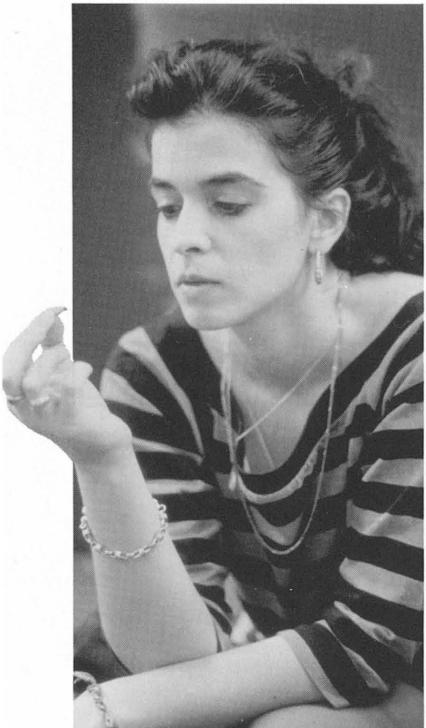
marriage. Indeed, the nuptials could not be less of a private matter – as is indicated by the opening shots of Michael and Donna's engagement video and the final sequence of their wedding video, in which all the relatives chip in with their good wishes.

Savoca clearly enjoys the satirical elements of this *Tony and Tina*-style Italian wedding parody, taking a caustic look at such kitsch customs as colouring the food to match the bridesmaids' outfits, women with 'big hair', the band of ageing men in ill-fitting tuxedos performing cover versions of 70s soul numbers, and the dodgy uncle who offers a good price on the wedding rings – not to mention the strident tones of the brassy Bronx patois. Nevertheless, she displays considerable sympathy for the plight of her characters caught in the ties that double-bind.

Refreshingly, this sympathy is bestowed equally on the men and women. Annabella Sciorra (in an auspicious first screen performance) brings a tough fighting edge to the character of Donna, who has to juggle her dreams of nuptial bliss and her love for Michael with disillusionment. Apprehension about the future casts shadows of doubt across her face, while Michael himself appears as much confused as churlish in his attitudes.

The uncertainty of their prospects is poignantly underlined as they pose for their wedding pictures, blinded by the flash and squinting at the camera. This ambivalence endows Savoca's portrait of modern marriage – whether in the Bronx or anywhere else – with more than a little cynicism.

#### Lizzie Francke



Juggling: Annabella Sciorra

## Flea Bites

### Distributor

BBC TV

### Production Company

BBC Films

For Screen Two

### Executive Producer

Mark Shivas

### Producers

Peter Kendal

Alan Dossor

### Production Associate

Anthony Smith

### Production Operatives Supervisor

Bill Brown

### Production Operatives

Chris Cutler

Charlie Johnson

Sam Stokes

John Sweet

### Location Manager

Jacmel Dent

### Assistant Directors

Paul Judges

Jamie Annett

Emma Bridgeman-Williams

Melanie Panario

### Screenplay

Stephen Lowe

### Director of Photography

Steve Saunderson

In colour

### Visual Effects Designer

Perry Brahan

### Graphic Designer

Jane Walker

### Editor

Ian Farr

### Production Designer

Graeme Thomson

### Music

Rachel Portman

### Costume Design

Pat Godfrey

### Make-up

Jan Nethercott

### Sound Editor

Lee Crichtow

### Sound Recordist

Malcolm Webberley

### Sound Re-recordist

Paul Hamblin

### Fight Arranger

Peter Brayham

### Cast

#### Anthony Hill

Jason

#### Nigel Hawthorne

Kryst

#### Dalton Walters

Billy

#### Michelle Fairley

Sharon

#### Tim Healy

Dave

#### Ashley Brooks

Paul

#### Charlie Bartle

Johnnie

#### Anthony Clarke

Kryst's Son

#### Thadeus Kaye

Kawalski

#### Anna Korwin

Polish Woman

#### Crispin Harris

Teacher

#### James Hooton

Adrian

#### Trevor Peake

Policeman

#### Ann Lathlane

Girl at Fairground

#### Phil Towers

Father at Fairground

#### Christopher Greener

Big Jimmy

9,000 feet

100 minutes



A small thing: Anthony Hill, Nigel Hawthorne

### United Kingdom 1991

#### Director: Alan Dossor

**TV** **MOVIE** Nottingham. While Jason, a twelve-year-old boy of mixed race, is robbing a house, its owner, the old Polish exile Kryst, returns. Jason makes off with a locked wooden box. Back in the flat he shares with his mother, Sharon, he finds in the box tiny silver models with wheels. Failing to sell them, he returns the box to Kryst, who tells him they were once used in a flea circus.

At first scornful, Jason becomes increasingly intrigued by Kryst's story. Meanwhile Sharon, unable to pay the rent, tells him they are going to move in with her lover, Dave, who runs a local pub. Resenting Dave, Jason spurns his friendly advances. When Jason turns up with a flea-ridden hedgehog, Kryst explains that human, not animal, fleas are needed. He tells Jason the circus was devised to entertain children in a concentration camp, and reluctantly agrees to help recreate it.

Having rounded up suitable fleas, Jason starts learning to train them. But Dave, hearing malicious rumours, concludes Kryst is a pederast and threatens the old man with violence. On learning the truth, he remorsefully allows the flea circus to be publicly staged in his pub. To make the show visible to a large audience, Jason steals a projector from his school – but midway through Kryst's presentation the machine overheats, killing the fleas and destroying all the models.

Jason is expelled for stealing the projector and Sharon, now pregnant, has him sent to an approved school. Kryst smuggles in some more fleas, and Jason devises a modernised "Flea Fantasy" with his Dungeons and Dragons models. Escaping from the school, he heads for the annual Goose Fair, where he hopes to stage his show. Kryst goes there to find him, as do Dave and Sharon. With the help of Kryst's old circus

colleagues, Jason finally mounts his Fantasy before an audience of enraptured youngsters. Leaving Jason and Sharon to talk things out, Kryst wanders away across the fairground.

"It was a thing for children, a few minutes for some children in a circle", says Nigel Hawthorne's whiskery old Pole, resisting the idea of presenting his flea circus to a mass audience. "Nobody will see anything – it's a small thing". His remarks, unfortunately, apply rather too accurately to *Flea Bites*, which shows all the signs of something small-scale and simple-minded – a half-hour children's play, perhaps – inflated beyond the interest of its material.

So a few handy parallels are devised – Kryst has lost a son, Jason a father; Kryst is a victim of Nazism, Jason of racial prejudice. We get the odd misty-lensed vision of Kryst's vanished son, plus bursts of machine-gun fire on the soundtrack, and when Dave goes to intimidate the old man he's dressed in black leather, with a snarling Alsatian on a leash.

But none of this adds very much except the impression that the Holocaust has once again been dragged in to lend instant dramatic resonance. Such heavyweight themes are in any case wasted in a script which persistently takes the soft option, defusing every conflict almost as soon as it has been set up. In the aftermath of Dave's attack on Kryst, there are ugly hints of a witch-hunt in the making – but then Dave fulsomely apologises, and we hear no more about it.

This culminating episode in particular plumbs woeful depths of implausibility, with a bunch of children and teenagers shown raptly enthralled by the Flea Fantasy. Since these are kids who have grown up with every style of high-tech zappery from Space Invaders to Nintendo, it's hard to believe such sluggish manoeuvres would even begin to engage their attention.

**Philip Kemp**

## Reviews

True Love  
Flea Bites



**Vicious circles: Mark Rylance**

**Distributor**

BBC TV

**Production Company**

BBC Films

For Screen Two

**Executive Producer**

Mark Shivas

**Producer**

Ruth Baumgarten

**Production**

**Associate**

Ralph Wilton

**Production Manager**

Terry Wright

**Location Manager**

Jane Cossey

**Casting Adviser**

Di Carling

**Assistant Directors**

Anthony Garrick

John Spencer

Beni Turkson

**Screenplay**

Frank Deasy

Based on the autobiographical novel by John Healy

**Director of Photography**

Rex Maidment

In colour

**Graphic Designer**

Christine Buttner

**Editor**

Michael Parker

**Production Designer**

Tony Burrough

**Music**

Philip Appleby

**Costume Design**

Rosalind Ebbutt

**Make-up**

Elaine Smith

**Sound Editor**

Stewart Henderson

**Sound Recordist**

Terry Elms

**Sound Re-recordist**

Aad Wirtz

**Chess Adviser**

Shaughan Feakes

**Fight Arranger**

Stuart St Paul

**Cast**

**Mark Rylance**

John Healy

**Andrew Dicks**

Young John Healy

**Billy Boyle**

Mr Healy

**Marian McLoughlin**

Mrs Healy

**Nick Dawnay**

Young Terry Healy

**Simon Napper**

Terry Healy

**John Garrett**

Albert

**Brian Hall**

George

**Pete Postlethwaite**

The Dipper

**Gerard Horan**

The Sham

**Clive Russell**

Mac

**Louis Mellis**

Jock

**Anna Keaveney**

Liverpool Lil

**Paddy Joyce**

Kelly

**John O'Toole**

Williams

**Lynsey Baxter**

Madalena

**Harry Landis**

Kaufman

**Ronan Vibert**

Fieldhouse

**Lyndam Gregory**

Fowler

**Julian Firth**

Bates

**Nicholas Palliser**

Chess Opponent

**Bunny May**

Fox

**Nigel Bradshaw**

Clive Soley

**Rosalind Bennett**

Kate

**Amanda Mealing**

Teresa

**Natalie Slater**

Miss Golon

**Noreen Kershaw**

Woman in Café

**Tam Dean Burn**

Andy

**David Foxe**

Pete

**Roger Frost**

Ken

**Dee Orr**

Margaret

**Steven Hammett**

Ron

**Kiera Clarke**

Aunty Mary

**Philip Fox**

Radiographer

**Stephen Hartford**

Priest

**Mark Anthony**

Newman

**Boswell**

**Vincent Keane**

Boxing Opponent

**Tom Lucy**

Sparring Partner

**Timothy Barlow**

Old Man

**Ultan Ely O'Carroll**

Dublin Tommy

**Betty Romaine**

Elisabeth Bolognini

Nuns

**Andrew Tansey**

Policeman

**David Bauckham**

Escort Screw

**Jon Croft**

Prison Chief

**Campbell Morrison**

Policeman in Cell

**Stuart St Paul**

Epileptic Prisoner

**Philip Bowen**

Doctor

**Jean Heard**

Nurse

**Harry Jones**

Fast Eddie

**Bill McCabe**

Billy

**John Rogan**

Gerry

**Barry Stearn**

Simon

**Eve White**

Chess Player

**8,100 feet**

**90 minutes**

**United Kingdom 1991**

**Director: Gillies MacKinnon**

In North London, young John Healy lives with his fanatically religious Irish father and withdrawn mother. His father despises him for his shadowed lung and hunched shoulders, and beats him frequently. At his father's insistence, John takes up boxing, a sport at which he excels in his teenage years. Yet ruined by alcoholism, John loses his chance to become a professional and ends up in the company of winos in the local park. John is soon lost in a world of destitute alcoholism: fighting with a rival wino, suffering frequent violent assault, and conning money out of the local church with his friend The Dipper to support his drinking habit.

Arrested for being on enclosed premises with intent to steal, John endures his first spell in prison, where he learns of his father's death. On his release, John assaults another wino and is soon returned to jail on trumped-up charges. Group therapy sessions fail to help him, despite his affection for a kindly and beautiful help worker. One day, John and his wino friends are enticed from the park to spend a week 'drying out' in a local hospital, where they become guinea-pigs in a hideous experiment – after being injected with a new "anti-booze" drug, the patients are encouraged to drink whisky, which induces vomiting and hysteria.

In his frenzy to escape the hospital, The Dipper slices his arm on broken glass; the wound becomes gangrenous and his arm is later amputated. One night, the now invalid Dipper is killed by his companions. Back in prison, John is taught to play chess by his cell mate, and is amazed to discover an aptitude for the game. On his release, John joins a local chess club where (despite their snobbish hostility) he proves his worth.

John visits his mother for the first time in many years and makes his peace. Having toyed with meditation, John enters a Grand Master Chess Tournament, where he is unbeaten. Anxious that such a disreputable character should not win their trophy, the chess club bend their own rules and force him to play last year's champion. John triumphs, but is offered money rather than the coveted trophy. At the home of a prominent chess club member, John plays four simultaneous matches with his back turned to the boards. Unable to enter their socialite world, John rejects tournament chess to pursue meditation.

"Chess was like the drink", surmises the beleaguered John Healy in the closing moments of this ferocious biography. "I wanted to be part of those homes, but each time

the game was over, I was back on the street. The game of chess is about competition, not friendship". Throughout Frank Deasy's adaptation of Healy's acclaimed novel, such pithy epithets are pushed to the fore, emphasising the unchanging nature of Healy's reaction to each new environmental hostility: total immersion, tempered with the knowledge of inevitable rejection. Whether cuffing his young brother George at his father's bidding (despite his passive nature), beating an opponent senseless in the boxing ring, or submitting to the laws of the winos in the grass arena, Healy's talent is for adapting, for playing the game.

Director Gillies MacKinnon introduces this theme powerfully in the film's opening shot in which the young John is seen imitating his father, who shadow-boxes while listening to sport on the radio. It is Healy's desperation to be accepted, manifested in his penchant for imitation, that convincingly motivates the character's bizarre personality changes. Credit too is due to Mark Rylance, whose extraordinary performance blends the fluidity of a chameleon with the downtrodden changelessness of an ostracised mutant. It is this paradoxical dual quality of submission and defiance which is at the heart of *The Grass Arena*. As a result, we are never able merely to sympathise with the character of Healy, nor to pity him, nor even to identify with him.

"When you're in the parks, you've got to live their way, or you die", John tells his mother in a crucial exchange, emphasising once again the surprising degree of control which he has exerted over each new 'development' of his character. It is the fear, finally, of John's unquantifiable nature which keeps him an outsider, whether from the winos or the chess masters. *The Grass Arena* closes not with a victorious tableau, but with a lonely crane shot of John striding across the once familiar park, having turned his back on the competitive snobbery of the chess set.

As his voice-over hints at the forthcoming challenge of meditation (which played such a crucial role in Healy's final mastery of his own talents), a coda reminds us that most of his wino friends have since died in squalor. Although the positive lessons of *The Grass Arena* are clear on one level – that personal fulfilment can only be attained through challenging oneself rather than through the approval of others – the sense of desperation which pervades this ending suggests that the world may be too cruel a place for personal endeavour to flourish. **Mark Kermode**

# The Lost Language of Cranes

**Distributor** BBC TV  
**Production Company** BBC Films  
For Screen Two  
In association with  
Thirteen-WNET  
**Executive Producers** Mark Shivas  
WNET:  
Kimberly Myers  
**Producer** Ruth Caleb  
**Production Associate** Derek Nelson  
**Production Manager** Susannah Maclean  
**Casting Adviser** Anne Hopkinson  
**Assistant Directors** Anthony Garrick  
Dave Reid  
Andy Jackson  
**Screenplay** Sean Mathias  
Based on the novel  
by David Leavitt  
**Director of Photography** Remi Adefarasin  
In colour  
**Editor** Sue Wyatt  
**Production Designer** Bruce Macadie  
**Music** Julian Wastall  
**Costume Design** James Keast  
**Make-up** Fran Needham  
**Sound Editor** Stephen Barnham  
**Sound Recordist** John Pritchard  
**Sound Re-recordist** David Old

**Cast**  
**Brian Cox** Owen Benjamin  
**Eileen Atkins** Rose Benjamin  
**Angus MacFayden** Philip Benjamin  
**Corey Parker** Elliot Abrahams  
**Rene Auberjonois** Geoffrey Lane  
**John Schlesinger** Derek Moulthorpe  
**Cathy Tyson** Jerene Parks  
**Richard Warwick** Frank  
**Nicholas Le Prevost** Nick  
**Ben Daniels** Robin Bradley  
**Frank Middlemass** Alex  
**Nigel Whitney** Winston Penn  
**Edmund Kente** Bob  
**Paul Cottingham**  
**Tom Harden**  
Porno Boys  
**Sjaak Van De Bent**  
Singer  
**Adam Matalon**  
Doorman  
**Ben McVeigh**  
Crane Child

**8,100 feet**  
**90 minutes**

## United Kingdom 1991

### Director: Nigel Finch

Every Sunday, university lecturer Owen Benjamin furtively visits the Fantasy Cinema, a gay porno house. His wife Rose, a copy editor, never asks about his weekly excursions but despairs of getting him to come flat-hunting; the flat they have lived in for twenty years must be surrendered soon to its returning owner. Their son Philip (also in publishing) pins his hopes on what promises to be a long-term relationship with American artist Elliot Abrahams, and contemplates coming out as gay to his parents. Elliot's flatmate Jerene Parks, researching a thesis on invented languages, comes upon the case of a semi-abandoned child who modelled a 'language' of sounds and gestures on his observation of mechanical cranes.

Elliot's childhood guardian Derek Moulthorpe, a celebrated author of children's books, visits Britain to promote his new book. Philip is thrilled to meet him, and hears from Derek's lover, Geoffrey Lane, how Elliot came to be orphaned and raised in their care. But Elliot bitterly resents Philip's enquiries into his past and threatens to end the relationship because Philip is too dependent and possessive. Owen and Rose take badly the revelation of their son's sexual orientation: Rose feels betrayed, while Owen suffers a minor nervous breakdown. Soon after, Elliot ends his affair with Philip and moves to Paris.

Philip picks up the pieces of his life with help from his old college friend Robin Bradley. Owen unexpectedly takes Philip to dinner and questions him frankly about his sexual history; he proposes a dinner party to introduce Philip to Winston Penn, a visiting American lecturer who (Owen thinks) might be gay. Owen plucks up the courage to visit a gay bar for the first time; he meets Frank, a builder, and goes to bed with him. Jerene packs in her thesis and turns her back on academia.

Philip arrives early for the dinner party and mentions to Rose Owen's real motive for organising it. Winston turns out to be straight, but the dinner is a convivial success. But Rose later tells Owen that she knows 'everything' about him, and her hurt incomprehension turns into hysterical abuse. Philip is meanwhile spending the night in Robin's flat and the two decide to become lovers. But their love-making is interrupted by a call from Owen, who needs a place to stay for the night. Philip hurries over to his flat to let Owen in, and father comes out to son. Nervously facing a future that may include Frank, Owen watches from the window as Philip leaves with Robin.

David Leavitt's 1987 novel, anchored in New York characters and settings, seems a remarkably perverse choice for the routine British made-for-TV treatment. The book takes its time exploring the backgrounds and lives since childhood of five main characters: three gay men (one deeply closeted, one young and insecure, one relaxed but footloose), an emotionally frigid heterosexual woman and, killing three politically correct birds with one stone, a black lesbian intellectual. But Sean Mathias and Nigel Finch seem oblivious to the novel's cultural specificity and blunder through an Anglicised distillation of its plot as if it were some repository of universal truths.

The absurdity of their approach is apparent from the very first scene, Owen's visit to the porno cinema, which has neither sociological nor poetic truth. British policing has never allowed the London gay scene to establish its own porno cinema, and even if it had it seems unlikely that it would have turned out to be the cruising-iest spot this side of the men's room at Grand Central Station, which is how Finch visualises it. We are evidently in some mid-Atlantic gay scene of the mind, as vacuous and phoney as anything found in a Merton Park quickie.

Having transplanted the setting to London, the film-makers proceed to fill it with expatriate Americans – presumably in deference to associate producers WNET. But the Benjamin family has become English, and so has Jerene. Not just English, but blandly middle-class English; the film has no time for the characters' childhood and is content to present them as quintessential British TV-drama 'types', with comfortable, spacious homes and nebulous jobs in the media. Even the disturbed 'crane-child' thrown up by Jerene's research is seen not as a tiny prisoner

in a squalid tenement but as an ethereal figure in the window of a Docklands penthouse.

The novel's title obviously obliged the film-makers to deal with the 'crane-child' somehow, but their suppression of the characters' 'roots' actually renders redundant all the nature/nurture speculations implied by the child's reinvention of semaphore. By reducing the novel to the bare lineaments of its plot, Mathias and Finch expose that plot as cruel farce in all but name. And they try to keep unintended laughter at bay in the two ways that have become standard in this kind of TV-film-making. First, by enlisting a stalwart team of stage and screen actors to give impeccably 'sensitive' performances. Second, by throwing in some derisory tics of 'style': the camera that artily tracks past a road accident, independently of any character's point-of-view; the camera that recedes from the characters as they embrace, turning their Habitat bedroom into infinite wastes of existential darkness.

Neither of these strategies succeeds in disguising the wretched treatment of the women characters: Jerene, no longer visibly lesbian, is hardly more than a walk-on, while Rose's problems are given scandalously short shrift. The film leaves the impression that its real *raison d'être* was to bring relatively graphic gay sex scenes to the TV screen. If so, why was it necessary to base it on a book at all? Or, if 'literariness' was a necessary alibi and the budget dictated a London setting, why not use an English source like Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library*? As it is, *The Lost Language of Cranes* turns an earnest book into ludicrous drama and does less to advance gay perspectives in British film-making than Isaac Julien's *Young Soul Rebels*.

**Tony Rayns**



Family business: Eileen Atkins, Angus MacFayden, Brian Cox



Mark Kermode reviews every rental/rental premiere video released this month and William Green reviews every retail/retail premiere video

#### ★ Highlights

Reviews in **Monthly Film Bulletin** (MFB) and **Sight and Sound** are cited in parentheses

## Rental

### Alice

RCA Columbia NVT 12821  
USA 1990

*Certificate 15* Director Woody Allen  
Disillusioned New Yorker Alice Tate seeks solace in the magical remedies of a Chinese acupuncturist. Quirky fare from a reliable old grouse whose obsessions (sex, death and New York) remain enchanting. (S&S July 1991)

### Edward Scissorhands

FoxVideo 1867  
USA 1990

*Certificate PG* Director Tim Burton  
★ Burton's lavish adult fairy-tale matures with each viewing. Johnny Depp is a joy as the outcast boy, but Danny Elfman's magical score is the real star. A treasure. (S&S July 1991)

### Everybody's Fine (Stanno tutti bene)

RCA Columbia CVT 13215  
Italy/France 1990

*Certificate PG*  
Director Giuseppe Tornatore  
Darker than the whimsical *Cinema Paradiso*, this tale of a father's pilgrimage to visit his estranged offspring is a mixture of fantasy and depressing realism. Downbeat, occasionally dreary, but marked with flashes of brilliance. *Subtitles* (S&S October 1991)

### A Kiss Before Dying

CIC VHA 1513  
USA 1991

*Certificate 18* Director James Dearden  
★ Stylish and largely misunderstood homage to the golden age of suspense by the writer of *Fatal Attraction*. Entertaining in spite of Sean Young's poor performance. (S&S June 1991)

### Let Him Have It

First Independent VA20145  
UK 1991

*Certificate 15* Director Peter Medak  
★ Tugging at the heartstrings, Medak's emotive and apolitical portrayal of the controversial hanging of Derek Bentley comes across on the small screen less like a flawed docu-drama and more like an exceptionally good soap opera. (S&S October 1991)

### New Jack City

Warner PEV 12073  
USA 1991

*Certificate 18* Director Mario Van Peebles  
★ Mean, macho and magnificent black gang movie with a 'Just say no'

message. This astonishing directorial debut tops most modern action romps. (S&S September 1991)

### Pump Up the Volume

RCA Columbia NVT 11617  
USA 1990

*Certificate 15* Director Allan Moyle  
★ Underrated teen-rebellion movie about an anarchic pirate radio DJ. A razor-sharp script, healthy doses of crudity, and Christian Slater's finest performance since *Heathers*. (S&S August 1991)

### A Rage in Harlem

Palace PVC 2184  
UK 1991

*Certificate 18* Director Bill Duke  
The soundtrack is the star in this lightweight but likeable adaptation of Chester Himes' cult novel set in the black underworld of 50s New York. Duke's lively direction evokes a colourful street-life milieu, compensating for the lack of real substance. (S&S September 1991)

### Return to the Blue Lagoon

RCA Columbia CVT 12839  
USA 1991

*Certificate 15* Director William A. Graham  
Ridiculous and unwelcome sequel to Randal Kleiser's soft-core, facts-of-life remake. Two kids on a desert island discover sex. (S&S September 1991)

### State of Grace

MCEG Virgin MOR 139  
USA 1990

*Certificate 18* Director Phil Joanou  
Grim tale of racial and familial tensions on the violent streets of New York's Hell's Kitchen. Solid performances by Sean Penn and Gary Oldman, but otherwise an unremarkable thriller. (S&S June 1991)

### Terminator 2: Judgment Day

Guild 8663  
USA 1991

*Certificate 15* Director James Cameron  
★ Cameron's apocalyptic sequel may lose its overpowering visual impact on the small screen, but the anti-war subtexts gain in equal measure. Unfortunately, a further two seconds have been cut from the original UK theatrical release – how about putting them all back for the sell-thru release? (S&S September 1991)

## Rental premiere

### And the Sea Will Tell

RCA Columbia CVT 13539  
USA 1991

*Certificate 15* Director Tommy L. Wallace  
Executive Producers Jim Green, Allen Epstein  
Screenplay James Henerson, based on the book by Vincent Bugliosi, Bruce Henderson  
Lead Actors Rachel Ward, Richard Crenna, James Brolin, Hart Bochner 185 minutes  
TV mini-series, true-life drama about the trial of Buck Walker and his girlfriend for the murder of Mac and Muff Graham on their boat.

### Barbarian Queen II

MCEG Virgin MVP 1028  
USA 1988

*Certificate 18* Director Joe Finley  
Producers Alan Krone, Anthony Norway  
Screenplay Howard R. Cohen  
Lead Actors Lana Clarkson, Greg Wrangler, Rebecca Wood 77 minutes  
Strangely proportioned men and women battle in a futuristic fantasy. Big swords, prominent cleavages, rippling muscles and rotten hairstyles.



Hand-made hero: Johnny Depp in 'Edward Scissorhands'

**Child of Darkness, Child of Light**

CIC VHB 2565

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Marina Sargent Producer Paul Tucker Screenplay Bruce Taggart, based on the book by James Paterson Lead Actors Brad Davis, Anthony Denison, Sela Ward, Paxton Whitehead 82 minutes Moribund TV movie rehash of *The Omen* – which makes even *Omen IV* look good!

**Conspiracy of Silence**

Odyssey ODY 309

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Francis Mankiewicz Executive Producer Bernard Zukerman Screenplay Suzette Couture Lead Actors Michael Mahonen, Jonathan Potts, Ian Tracey, Diego Chambers 183 minutes TV mini-series true story about four white men who murder a young American Indian woman and are protected by their racist kinfolk. Grim stuff indeed.

**Crazy from the Heart**

First Independent VA 20146

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Thomas Schlamme Producer R.J. Louis Screenplay Linda Voorhees Lead Actors Christine Lahti, Ruben Blades, William Russ, Louise Latham 91 minutes Romantic comedy featuring the ever-wonderful Lahti as an agitated spinster who finds love in the arms of a Mexican janitor. A welcome change from the usual star-crossed teens theme.

**Deadly Game**

CIC VHB 2567

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Thomas J. Wright Producers Jonathan Persons, Thomas J. Wright Screenplay Wes Claridge Lead Actors Michael Beck, Roddy McDowell, Jenny Seagrove, Marc Singer 90 minutes TV horror fantasy – seven unfortunate are forced to take part in a deadly game to escape the island home of the vengeful Mr Osiris.

**Deadly Surveillance**

First Independent VA 20144

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Paul Ziller Producer Louis Goyer Screenplay Paul Ziller, Hal Salwen Lead Actors Michael Ironside, Christopher Bondy, David Carradine, Susan Almgren 89 minutes Characteristically hard-faced performance by Ironside in an above-average disposable thriller. A cop teams up with an old rival and stakes out his girlfriend's apartment when she is suspected of drug trafficking.

**Disturbed**

Warner 12245

USA 1990

Certificate 18 Director Charles Winkler Producers Brad Wyman, Patricia

Foulkrod Screenplay Emerson Bixby, Charles Winkler Lead Actors Roddy McDowell, Pamela Gidley, Geoffrey Lewis, Priscilla Pointer, Irwin Keyes 93 minutes

★ Wonderful and weird psycho-chiller which exudes grimly humorous charm in spite of Winkler's penchant for wonky camera angles. Sadistic shrink McDowell is driven bananas by his beautiful victim's refusal to stay dead. Don't miss the post-end credits *Clockwork Orange* gag!

**Easy Kill**

Genesis EXC 0029

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director Josh Spencer Producer Ronnie Isaacs Screenplay Greg Latter Lead Actors Frank Stallone, Jane Balder, Cameron Mitchell 88 minutes Frank Stallone fumbles his lines in a tedious thriller which goes off the boil immediately after the violent opening massacre.

**Intimate Stranger**

Medusa MC 372

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Allan Holzman Producers Yoram Pelman, J.J. Lichavco Pelham Screenplay Rob Fresco Lead Actors Debbie Harry, James Russo, Tim Thomerson, Paige French 89 minutes After a startling first half in which phone-sex operative Debbie Harry is drawn into a deadly *ménage à trois*, this nicely sleazy thriller descends into a series of chases and punch-ups.

**Ivory Hunters**

Warner PEV 35423

USA 1990

Certificate PG Director Joseph Sargent Producer Robert Halmi Screenplay Richard Guttman, Bill Bozzone Lead Actors John Lithgow, Isabella Rossellini, James Earl Jones 94 minutes Classy, scenic TV adventure about the villainous ivory trade in Africa. Fine cast and a well-rounded script.

**Karate Cop**

EV EVV 1211

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Kurt Anderson Producer Steve Cohen Screenplay Richard Brandes, Jiles Fitzgerald Lead Actors Jeff Wincott, Cynthia Rothrock, Paul Johansson 87 minutes LA undercover cop Wincott ('The new Van Damme') gives the local police martial arts training to help them fight gang war, drugs and prostitution.

**Kiss Me a Killer**

RCA Columbia CVT 12488

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Marcus De Leon Producer Catherine Cyran Screenplay Christopher Wooden, Marcus De Leon Lead Actors Julie Carmen, Robert Beltran, Guy Boyd, Ramon Franco 82 minutes Frustrated wife and waitress Teresa embarks on an affair with a soulful

musician and ends up murdering her uncouth husband. Stop me if you've heard this one.

**Mortal Passion**

Genesis EXC 0031

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Michael Switzer Producer Susan Weber-Gold Screenplay Denne Petitclerc Lead Actors Susan Lucci, Tim Matheson, Michael Dudikoff 91 minutes

A woman's illicit affair with a photographer holds the key to her alibi in a bizarre murder investigation.

**976 Evil II: The Return**

Medusa M0250

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Jim Wynorski Producer Paul Hertzberg Screenplay Eric Anjou, based on the story by Rick Glassman Lead Actors Patrick O'Bryan, Rene Assa, Debbie James, Brigitte Nielsen 87 minutes

Wynorski churns out more daft thrills in this cheap and cheerful sequel. A headmaster uses diabolical powers to pursue and persecute his students. Packed with in-jokes for genre buffs.

**Nukie**

20.20 Vision NVT 14075

South Africa 1991

Certificate U Director Sias Odendal Producers Albie Venter, Roy Sargeant Screenplay Benjamin Taylor Lead Actors Glynnis Johns, Ronald France, Steve Railsback 95 minutes Cheap, limp rip-off of *ET*, set in the wilds of South Africa. Minimal budget, minimal entertainment.

**Once Around**

CIC VHA 1496

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Lasse Hallström Producers Amy Robinson, Griffin Dunne Screenplay Malia Scotch Marmo Lead Actors Richard Dreyfuss, Holly Hunter, Danny Aiello, Laura San Giacomo, Gena Rowlands 110 minutes

★ From the director of *My Life as a Dog*, a bravely unresolved (and thus sadly uncommercial) romantic drama about a relationship between a gregarious oaf and a formerly mousy woman. Good performances and a cracking script produce laughter and tears. Well worth a look.

**One Good Cop**

Buena Vista D940932

USA 1990

Certificate 15 Director Heywood Gould Producer Laurence Mark Screenplay Heywood Gould Lead Actors Michael Keaton, Rene Russo, Anthony LaPlagia, Kevin Conway 90 minutes

Dismal action drama. Michael Keaton is the good cop turned bad who adopts his murdered partner's horrible children. Excruciating dialogue, stagnant ideas and acting more wooden than Sherwood Forest.

**The Perfect Weapon**

CIC VHB 2567

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Mark DiSalle Producers Mark DiSalle, Pierre David Screenplay David C. Wilson Lead Actors Jeff Speakman, John Dye Mako 81 minutes

Hand-to-hand combat vehicle showcasing the muscular talents of newcomer Speakman.

**Return to Justice**

Genesis 0030

Country and Year Unknown

Certificate 15 Director Vincent G. Cox Producer S.D. Nethersole Screenplay Michael O'Rourke Lead Actors Richard Lynch, Griffin O'Neal, Tawny Fere, James Ryan, Cameron Mitchell 90 minutes

Low budget action movie. A gung-ho father rescues his daughter from South American drug barons, generating senseless violence but sadly little else.

**A Row of Crows**

CIC VHA 1498

USA 1990

Certificate 18 Director J.S. Cardone Producer Carol Kottenbrook Screenplay J.S. Cardone Lead Actors John Beck, Steven Bauer, Mia Sara, Phil Brock, Katharine Ross 99 minutes

★ Moody thriller, distinguished by Cardone's brooding camerawork and a fine electronic score. The discovery of a headless corpse re-opens an old murder case. Sturdy performances, except from Ross miscast as an alcoholic mortician.

**Son of Darkness**

First Generation FG 1004

USA 1991

Certificate 15 Director David F. Price Producer Richard Weinman Screenplay Leslie King Lead Actors Rosalind Allen, Steve Bond, Scott Jacoby, Michael Praed 92 minutes

★ Sprightly and efficient horror, derivative of *Rosemary's Baby* but boasting some original twists and delivering a few tingles.

**Sweet Poison**

CIC VHA 1530

USA 1991

Certificate 18 Director Brian Grant Producer Michael M. Scott Screenplay Walter Klenhard Lead Actors Steven Bauer, Edward Herrmann, Patricia Healy 96 minutes

A frustrated woman becomes sexually entangled with her brutish captor and plots to dispose of her wimpy husband. Well-worn theme efficiently rehashed, boosted by Bauer's charm.

**Talent for the Game**

CIC VHB 2569

USA 1991

Certificate PG Director Robert M. Young Producer Martin Elfand Screenplay David Himmelstein, Tom Donnelly Lead Actors

Edward James Olmos, Lorraine Bracco

87 minutes

Yet another 'baseball as an allegory for life' yarn. Workable execution, tired theme.

#### Valley of Death

MCEG Virgin MVP 1029

USA 1988

Certificate 15 Director Robert C. Hughes

Producers Brad Krevoy, Steven Stabler

Screenplay Robert C. Hughes, George

Frances Skrow Lead Actors William

Smith, Cameron Mitchell, John Kerr,

Mark Mears 92 minutes

A group of holiday campers in

Memorial Valley are stalked by a

killer caveman. Haven't they seen

*Friday the 13th*?

## Retail

#### Animal Crackers

CIC Classic VHR 1107

USA 1930 Price £9.99

Certificate U Director Victor Heerman

★ Four Marx brothers attend a party hosted by the imperishable Margaret Dumont. In a withering crossfire of surreal dialogue, not much of the

crockery survives. B/W (No MFB reference)

#### Beautiful Dreamers

Island World Video IWCV 1005

Canada 1990 Price £14.99

Certificate 15 Director John Harrison

Bearded poet Walt Whitman (Allen Ginsberg lookalike Rip Torn) helps a nineteenth century doctor liberalise discipline in an insane asylum. Woolly and wishful. (MFB No. 684)

#### Bird on a Wire

CIC Video VHR 1462

USA 1990 Price £12.99

Certificate 15 Director John Badham

Noisy chase caper with Goldie Hawn and Mel Gibson fleeing from various bad guys. (MFB No. 682)

#### Blue Steel

First Independent VA 30205

USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Kathryn Bigelow

★ Tough urban thriller, stylishly directed by Bigelow (*The Loveless*) and starring Jamie Lee Curtis as a gun-toting rookie cop. (MFB No. 682)

#### Broken Blossoms

Thames Silents TV 8128

USA 1919 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director D.W. Griffith

★ Griffith's classic melodrama, set in the Victorian Limehouse slums, is illuminated by the young Lillian Gish and refreshed by a modern Carl Davis/Louis Gottschalk score. Colour-tinted

(MFB No. 502)

#### Burning Secret

First Rate VA 30206

UK/USA 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate PG Director Andrew Birkin Damp version of a Stefan Zweig short story, with Klaus Maria Brandauer and Faye Dunaway emoting together in a Marienbad hotel under the eyes of adolescent David Eberts. (MFB No. 663)

#### Communion

First Independent VA 30212

USA 1989 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Philippe Mora The 'true' story of close encounters between aliens and novelist Whitley Strieber (Christopher Walken). The blinding lights and sound effects are over-familiar. (MFB No. 681)

#### The Dead

First Rate VA 30209

USA/UK 1987 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director John Huston ★ Huston's last film, a very deliberate epiphany, evokes the vanished Dublin of James Joyce. Little drama, but magnificent performances by Anjelica Huston and Donal McCann. (MFB No. 647)

#### Desert Hearts

First Rate VA 30208

USA 1985 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 Director Donna Deitch ★ In a rooms-for-rent ranchhouse outside Reno in 1959, a divorcée (Helen Shaver) discovers new emotional horizons with a local sculptress (Patricia Charbonneau). Dignified and unsensational. (MFB No. 631)

#### The General

Thames Silents TV 8129

USA 1926 Price £14.99

Certificate U

Directors Buster Keaton/Clyde Bruckman Quintessentially po-faced Keaton comedy, with more brilliant stunts than a modern blockbuster. B/W (No MFB reference)

#### I See a Dark Stranger

(US Title: *The Adventuress*)

Connoisseur CR 056

UK 1946 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Frank Launder ★ IRA sympathiser Deborah Kerr becomes unwittingly involved in a Nazi



Dubliner: Anjelica Huston in 'The Dead'

spy ring until English officer Trevor Howard puts her on the right track. The adroit mix of romantic comedy and suspense owes much to Hitchcock. B/W (MFB No. 150)

#### The Moderns

First Rate VA 30210

USA 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Alan Rudolph Multi-character fresco of expatriate life in the Paris of Hemingway and Stein. Fine acting by Geraldine Chaplin, John Lone and Keith Carradine. (MFB No. 662)

#### Phantom of the Opera

CIC Classics VHR 1517

USA 1943 Price £9.99

Certificate PG Director Arthur Lubin Minor key, technicolor version of the horror classic, with musical interludes for Nelson Eddy, and not much of a mask for Claude Rains. (MFB No. 121)

#### The Rainbow

First Rate VA 30211

UK 1988 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 Director Ken Russell Unsatisfactory prequel to Russell's *Women in Love*, depicting the rural adolescence of D.H. Lawrence's Ursula Brangwen. The young stars (Sammi Davis, Paul McGann) are upstaged by too many veterans (Glenda Jackson, David Hemmings, Dudley Sutton). (MFB No. 672)

#### Red Ensign

Connoisseur CR 053

UK 1934 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Michael Powell A quota-quickie Powell film made during the Depression, with little interest besides the documentary scenes of the Clyde shipyards. Its plea for industrial protectionism is almost as dated as the acting. B/W (MFB No. 572)

#### The Silver Fleet

Connoisseur CR 054

UK 1943 Price £14.99

Certificate U Directors Vernon Sewell/Gordon Wellesley ★ Routine wartime propaganda, designed to express solidarity with occupied Holland. The acting is exemplary, however, with Ralph Richardson as an heroic saboteur-industrialist and Googie Withers as his loyal wife. B/W (MFB No. 111)

#### The Thief of Baghdad

Thames Silents TV 8127

USA 1924 Price £14.99

Certificate U Director Raoul Walsh Douglas Fairbanks and Anna May Wong star in a film noted for its spellbinding sets by production designer William Cameron Menzies. Colour-tinted (MFB No. 493)

#### The Trouble with Harry

CIC Classic VHR 1146

USA 1955 Price £9.99

Certificate PG Director Alfred Hitchcock ★ Rarely seen black comedy, preoccupied with the farcical graveyard antics of a corpse that won't stay buried. The young Shirley MacLaine stands out in the mainly anonymous cast. (MFB No. 268)

#### Two Thousand Women

Connoisseur CR 055

UK 1944 Price £14.99

Certificate PG Director Frank Launder ★ Fascinating and bizarre film about a group of women POWs interned in a French mansion. Launder lays much useful groundwork for his later *St Trinians* comedies. B/W (MFB No. 129)

#### Vertigo

CIC Classic VHR 1130

USA 1958 Price £9.99

Certificate PG Director Alfred Hitchcock



Lovers' leap: James Stewart, Kim Novak

★ Masterpiece of manipulative cinema – a paranoiac web is weaved around suffering James Stewart as he yields to an obsession for Kim Novak. (MFB No. 296)

#### Vincent & Theo (Vincent et Théo)

Island World Video IWCV 1004

France/UK 1990 Price £14.99

Certificate 15 Director Robert Altman Another plunge into the lives of the Van Gogh brothers. Altman does not insist too much on the well-known canvases, preferring to use his own painterly eye. English version (MFB No. 678)

#### The Whales of August

First Rate VA 30207

USA 1987 Price £10.99

Certificate U Director Lindsay Anderson Splendid performances from Lillian Gish, Vincent Price and Bette Davis as they bask in their twilight years in a clapboard house by the sea. (MFB No. 652)

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at *Sight and Sound*, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. Facsimile 071 436 2327

## Gus' narcs

From Professor W.J. Howell Jnr

I take off all of my hats to Amy Taubin for her insightful and eloquent critique of Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (S&S January). That so much subtext can be extracted so literately from such a hideous film is pure talent. I wonder, however, about Taubin's own private experience of America, writing, as she does: "Van Sant is a distinctly American film-maker with an extraordinary sense of place". Yes, he's an American director, but exactly which "place" does he have a sense of? Portland? Maybe. Idaho? Hardly. Italy? Forget it. Van Sant's place is the mind-rot of self-absorbed, spoiled, white brats from suburbia. Mike and Scott have about as much claim to alienation as George Bush. I don't blame them for being puerile misfits, but I do blame Van Sant, River Phoenix and Keanu Reeves for putting such bloodless characters up on the silver screen.

I mean, who cares about their snivelling, valueless, little pouty-faced lives? I cared not a fig for any one of them. These lost children of Reagan learned their lessons well – life's about hustling; making money any way one can; live for today and only for yourself. When responsibility beckons, escape through the three 'narcs': narcotics, narcolepsy, narcissism. Blame always resides outside one's own self.

What definitely marks Van Sant as "distinctly American" is his obsession with contemporary tabloid topics – disease, homelessness and homosexuality being the current favourite flavours of today's attention-deficient moviegoers. Not that these aren't important subjects; only that they've been done better in *Pixote*, *Longtime Companions* and *My Beautiful Laundrette*; films with layered characters whom we care about, not MTV icons.

Canisius College, Buffalo, NY

## Sexual violence

From Angela McRobbie

*Cape Fear* locates itself as a film not just in the history of cinema. If anything, its themes are more profoundly literary: it is a film which looks back to Hawthorne and on to Faulkner for its dramaturgical vocabulary. It is not surprising, then, that this piece of American gothic should bring out the old-fashioned literary critic in the contemporary film critic.

Strange, however, that although both Jim Hoberman and Jenny Diski (S&S February) touch on the threat and the reality of sexual violence in the film, both turn away from the challenge and the provocation which Scorsese poses. It is as though the sheer achievement of the film puts it too firmly in the world of art for the critic to dare respond in the language of politics. Nothing so dreary, so totally uninteresting as sexual politics should taint the vocabulary of the critic when s/he is dealing with such an obvious, if flawed, masterpiece.

This is an insult, I think, to Scorsese.



Reagan's lost children: River Phoenix as Mike in 'My Own Private Idaho'

In a film whose narrative runs the gamut from sexual conflict in marriage to fully fledged sexual violence following a drunken encounter in a bar, it is not enough to talk, as Hoberman does, about "rough sex". The same critic even suggests that the film is "softened" by the presence and voiceover of the teenage daughter at the start and close of the film. She might even have imagined the whole thing. Silly girl. Diski refuses altogether the explicit challenge laid down by Scorsese to the female spectator of *Cape Fear*. This suggests that we can all be seduced by the sadist/rapist – that, in a sense, he lurks within our unconsciousness. Are these critics scared off by the bad press feminists have had in recent years, especially those who debate the politics of violence? Is it too unsophisticated even to mention the leakages out from the text of the film to the reality of the street?

Well I'd rather risk such terrible unsophistication if it helps us to understand the manipulation of fear in the text, and the manifestation of fear on the street. These seem important questions that don't go away by turning away from them.

London

## Petrified documents

From Marc Karlin

Roger Bolton (S&S February) challenges his readers to name five British documentary film-makers whose films we would do anything to see, that is, stay at home to watch them on television instead of going out. He answers his own question by pre-



Eye to eye: the art of documentary

suming that our inability to do so would be due to the facts that: 1. There is a lack of mischief-makers like Ken Russell and Alan Parker; 2. There is a lack of polished professionals like Eddie Mirzoeff and Peter Kosminsky; 3. The new economics of broadcasting militates against documentaries and privileges news and current affairs.

I would suggest that there is another reason, and one more insidious than the culture or strange economics of the world of television. That reason is the increasing gulf between what the viewer is still being asked to watch and the increasingly petrified political culture the viewer lives in. It is the feeling that if I, the viewer, feel increasingly powerless, I can only make myself 'independent' of that feeling by renouncing any possibility of influencing the world which makes me powerless. Indeed, the only way of mastering that feeling would be by showing my indifference. This feeling would account for both the increase in documentaries that demand of you nothing but your need to satisfy your voyeurism, and the decrease in documentaries that not only reveal the history and construction of that feeling, but also suggest ways of coming to terms with it by means other than simply taking comfort in your own sense of paralysis.

If Roger Bolton started his article by issuing a challenge, I will end my letter by doing the same. Roger Bolton took up an extremely courageous stand in both making and defending his film on the killing of the three IRA members on the Rock of Gibraltar. The ensuing row over this film, which resulted in Thames Television losing its franchise, was never documented. Had it been, we would have been somewhat the wiser on the present state of documentary film-making in Britain. My challenge to him is to make that film, and in so doing to confront the culture of paralysis which is doing so much to make documentaries a useless luxury.

Lusia Films, London

## Cinema versus tv

From Rod Stoneman

The imaginative conjunction of Andrew Britton's essay on cinema documentary and Roger Bolton's belated plea for more mischievous documentary-making on television (S&S February) underlines the distance between the two traditions. In broad terms, cinema documentary had stronger visual and political emphases than television documentary. Yet ironically, in so far as cinema documentary survives, it is in, on and through television, at least in this country. Although, as Roger Bolton hints, documentary's formal and radical strengths have often been greatly truncated within television. It is in this context that the aggressive, viral commercial pressures on the entire ecology of British television must be challenged.

Channel 4, London

## Corrigendum

The contents page of S&S February carried reference to a review of *Life on a String*. It was withdrawn at the last moment and appears on page 36 of the current issue.

# Domino effects

Benjamin Woolley

The story goes that the 'magic' of film was discovered in the mid-1890s by the French footwear manufacturer turned fairground magician turned film producer Georges Méliès when his camera jammed. It soon freed itself, but held one frame in the gate for long enough to leave a ghost-like trace of the action being recorded. Others had already noted the effects that could be achieved by stopping and starting film, notably Thomas Edison's assistants, but Méliès was perhaps the first to see the potential of film itself, rather than the staged events it could record, as a medium of trickery and illusion. The films he produced in the opening years of the twentieth century astonished fairground audiences, particularly with their displays of cranial abuse: *The Man with the Rubber Head* (1902) featured Méliès blowing his head up like a balloon and *The Melomaniac* (1903) his own decapitation.

Nothing much has changed since Méliès' day. The same basic techniques are still used. It has been more a process of refinement than revolution that has enabled men to fly and move faster than a speeding bullet – until, claims Quantel, the present.

Quantel, well known in the television industry for its Paintbox and Harry computer systems, announced 'Domino' at an American trade conference last autumn. The name, inevitably, is a contraction of an awkward description of the machine's function: Digital Opticals for Movies. We have heard so much about digital imagery, and seen so many films promoted as offering the most advanced computer graphics, that it is easy to forget that film remains an essentially non-digital medium: wet, chemical, messy – more

organic than mechanic. The film image, though it may have originated in the most advanced computer, is still stored by the same basic optical process used in Méliès' time, and no amount of technology can change the limitations that such a process imposes.

'Optical' effects, effects which involve manipulating the film image itself, as opposed to 'special' effects, which involve staging a special, illusory event for the camera to film, still amount to little more than layering images one on top of another – Superman over the sky he is flying through. Even the most basic effects – effects such as fades, mixes and wipes, that can be instantly realised using video – are awkward to achieve using film. Complex scenes often rely on the layering of a number of images – a background might have three or four elements overlaid on top of it, each layer having to be accurately matched up with all the others. This introduces problems with 'generations': as each new layer is added, so a new copy is made, and as copies are themselves copied, the image starts to degrade. So, to save generations, several layers are added at once, which creates problems in ensuring that each individual layer stays in register with the others.

Domino is designed to change that for ever, and because of this is potentially one of the most significant developments in film production technology since the introduction of colour. In technological terms, it is not particularly revolutionary. It is based around the Quantel Paintbox system and standard computer equipment. What is different is that Quantel has managed to use advanced (and expensive) forms of this technology to create a system that can cope with the enormous amount of information stored on each

It is easy to forget that film remains an essentially non-digital medium: wet, chemical, messy, more organic than mechanic

frame of 35mm film, the 'resolution' that makes film so much sharper and clearer than video. It is this resolution that limits the Domino to storing a maximum of 1.5 minutes of film at any one time – despite the fact that it has the same amount of storage capacity as about 500 desktop computers.

It works by 'digitising' short sequences of film, dividing each frame of film into a grid or map of points – up to 8,410,000 in the case of Domino – and measuring the colour and intensity of the film at each point. Using these measurements, the Domino computer can then be used to manipulate the image, to move parts of it around the frame, montage it with other images, change colours, fade, mix, wipe...

Quantel demonstrated what Domino could do with a 35mm still frame of a rural location featuring a road and some thatched cottages. Unsightly power lines, chimney pots, concrete kerbs and tarmac were seamlessly removed, grey clouds were replaced with blue skies, day was even turned into night. How easy it is to make such changes when a background is covered with a complex arrangement of moving foreground characters remains to be seen. Nevertheless, Quantel's demonstration clearly shows that Domino can do to film what digital systems are already doing to video and photographs, allowing elements to be added to and removed from an image without compromising its 'photorealism'.

Systems like Domino will inevitably become a commonplace part of the studio's post-production equipment. When it does, some might regret a certain loss of magic, the exorcism of Méliès' ghostly traces in favour of a new, more literal, 'realistic' set of tricks, the triumph of dull silicon over sparkling silver.

## Professor Potemkin's competition

The solution to January's picture caption competition was Deborah Kerr and David Farrar in 'Black Narcissus'. A video of 'The Angelic Conversation' goes to Roy Cutting of Ipswich for supplying the very English quotation: "Oh come on. You said I could ride the pony after the first five miles".

This month 'Sight and Sound' launches a new competition. Readers have to come up with a full set of answers and send them by 15 March to Sight and Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL. We have ten box-sets of 'A Rage in Harlem' (including a sweatshirt, calendar and video) to give away plus ten CDs of the soundtrack. 'A Rage in



**Harlem** is released on rental by Palace Premiere.

Our first set of questions involves author-screenwriters.

- Christopher Hampton developed a play and then a script from an eighteenth-century epistolary novel (see picture). Which Frenchman wrote the original?

- Which author wrote 'Absalom Absalom' and 'The Big Sleep'?
- This contemporary playwright once wrote a Western in which his second wife starred opposite Clark Gable. Who is he?
- The first draft of Fritz Lang's anti-Nazi film, 'Hangmen Also Die', was written in Hollywood by a German playwright of communist sympathies. Who?
- Who wrote the script of Tarkovsky's 'Andrei Rublev', and later came west to make a thriller called 'Runaway Train'?
- Charles Brackett and later I. A. L. Diamond were long-time collaborators of which prolific writer-director?
- Which ex-film critic of 'The

**Spectator** was the figure behind such films as 'The Third Man' and 'The Fallen Idol'?

- S. J. Perelman served on two films as gag-writer for which famous four-man vaudeville team?
- His stories 'Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?' and 'We Can Remember it for you Wholesale' became 'Blade Runner' and 'Total Recall'. Who was this science-fiction writer?
- Which multi-talented British screenwriter wrote 'Z Cars', 'The Italian Job' and 'Edge of Darkness'?

February's prize is two copies of the original 'Cape Fear' (1961, directed by J. Lee Thompson), which is available to buy as part of CIC Video's 'Classic Collection'.

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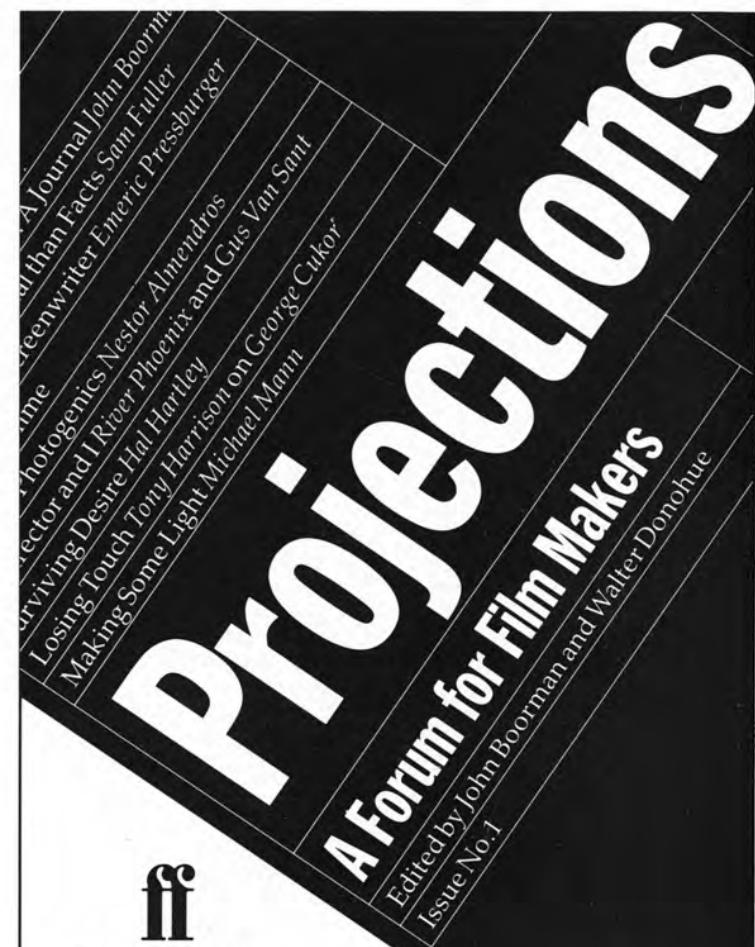
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An exciting new venture in film publishing, PROJECTIONS will be an annual publication devoted entirely to the cinema. It will reflect the past year in the movies as well as speculating about the future.

The centrepiece of the first issue is a journal John Boorman has compiled over the course of the last year which records his responses to the events and trends of 1991 and their implications for the future of cinema.

The book also contains contributions from leading practitioners of cinema including Jonathan Demme, Nestor Almendros, River Phoenix, Hal Hartley, Michael Mann, Sam Fuller and Emeric Pressburger.

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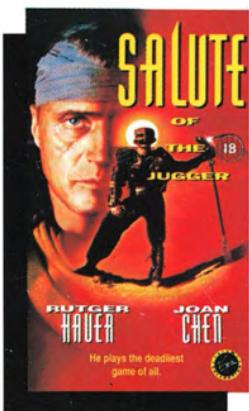
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